Commentary

March 2003

THE OTHER WAR ZONES

Facing Up to North Korea
Joshua Muravchik

Did We Fail in Afghanistan?
Frederick W. Kagan

The Pakistani Time Bomb
Alex Alexiev

Judaism Beyond Words: Part 4
David Gelernter

Up from Hip-Hop
John H. McWhorter

The Cohabitation Blues
Kay S. Hymowitz

Selling Dvořák Short
Terry Teachout

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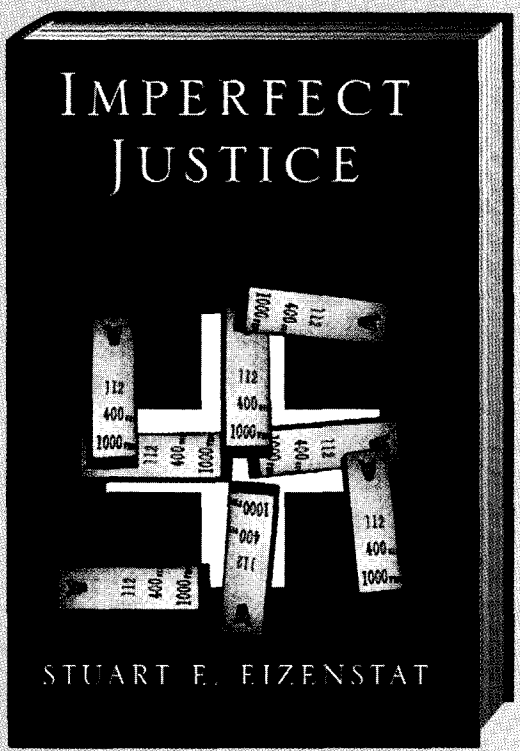

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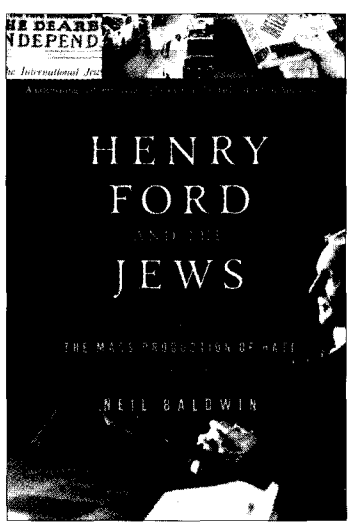

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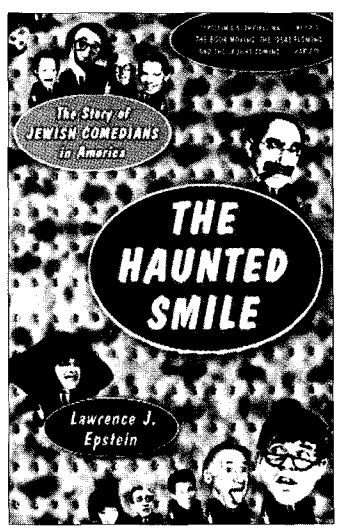

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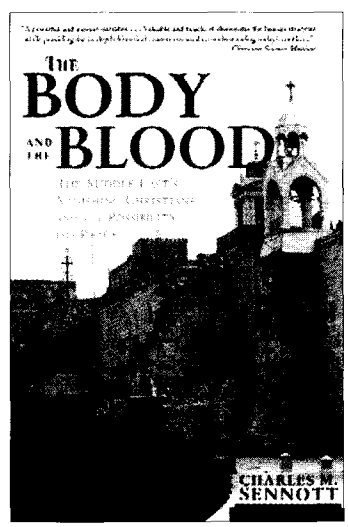

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Commentary
March 2003

Letters from Readers

Anti-Americanism

To the Editor:

Victor Davis Hanson provides a thoughtful analysis of the role of affluence, security, and privilege in fomenting anti-Americanism in the U.S. ["'I Love Iraq, Bomb Texas,'" December 2002]. He correctly notes that such sentiments are found predominantly on the Left, but he fails to ask why this should be so. One factor Mr. Hanson dismisses is Marxism. Though he notes its legacy in the radical egalitarianism of postmodernists and multiculturalists, he writes that "that particular religion . . . is just about gone from the picture these days."

I would suggest, however, that far from abating, the influence of Marxism is the live wire sparking today's anti-Americanism. Soviet Communism promised a paradise of fairness and justice, but was ultimately defeated because of its inability to compete against our economic and military strength. Many on the Left took this as a loss for the cause of social equity. The sin for which they now hold the U.S. culpable is deicide. No one looks with favor upon those who destroy their gods, and the reflexive anti-American rage of today's Left is not surprising.

Gerald Smallberg
New York City

To the Editor:

In his otherwise excellent piece, Victor Davis Hanson mistakenly asserts that the American military is "the largest and best-trained . . . in history." He certainly knows that today's 1.4-million-person force is dwarfed by the wartime armies of the last century, and probably falls well short of China's in manpower strength.

The more interesting question is whether the U.S. military is ready for future challenges. Today's force is doubtless the most technologically advanced in history, but training is another matter. It requires time, money, land, and available troops. As America's military commitments grow, training will suffer in the absence of significant increases in force size. Despite the recent Afghan campaign, the "war on terror," the looming conflict with Iraq, and ongoing commitments in Korea, the Balkans, the Sinai, and elsewhere, the Bush administration has made no effort to increase significantly the size of our military, nor has it made a public appeal for additional volunteers—much less invoked the possibility of a draft.

In comparing today's anti-Americanism to the decadence of the Romans, Mr. Hanson ignores the increasingly mercenary make-up of Rome's military during its late imperial period. As he notes, earlier Romans "knew what it was to be Roman." Roman citizens were willing to fight for their nation and commit their sons to its defense. It is not clear that either the American public or its military feels the same way, and the United States is the weaker for it.

Jonathan F. Keiler
Bowie, Maryland

To the Editor:

In an otherwise superb article, Victor Davis Hanson compares the left-wing "groupspeak" that dominates contemporary academic life to that of both Soviet apparatchiks *and* the medieval Church. This yokes together a very unequal team. It is difficult to see any real similarity between the mind-withering aridity of the Marxist / Leninist intellectual climate and the philosophical fecundity of a period in Church history that gave us Abelard, Anselm, Ockham, and, of course, Thomas Aquinas.

Craig S. Maxwell
La Mesa, California

To the Editor:

Long live Victor Davis Hanson! Americans who decry U.S. policies abroad

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while living a life of luxury and security here perhaps should not be ridden out of town on a rail—but they should be ignored as the sanctimonious hypocrites that they are.

KEN DANIELS
Denver, Colorado

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON writes:

Gerald Smallberg apparently wants to punch up my reference to "Marxist professors signing their mass mailings with the pompous titles of their chairs, endowed through capitalist largess." He may be right to tie our cultural elite's anti-Americanism to doctrinaire Marxism, but I wonder whether this really applies outside the philosophy-department lounge. Few in the widely diverse group of actors, media personalities, and writers who express an automatic dislike of their country have read much or know anything about Marx. Most, like Barbra Streisand or Sean Penn, would seem to have come to their half-baked ideas out of ignorance, a vague sense of guilt, a desire to win the approbation of their peers, and a need to compensate in the abstract for what they do and how they live in the concrete.

My even mushier reference to "the radical egalitarianism of multiculturalism and postmodernism" was not meant to be exclusionary—I am sure some anti-Americans are not merely Marxists but Communists—but rather to acknowledge that today's utopians are usually not the type to make lockstep, Marxist-style demands for an end to democratic elections or private property.

I thank Jonathan F. Keiler for reminding us that China's is the much larger army. My phrase "largest and best-trained" was intended to suggest two interconnected criteria; no other army (China's included) has been *both* as large and as well-trained as our own. I also agree that our military is too small for the obligations that it is now asked to undertake—as Donald and Frederick Kagan have pointed out so well in a series of writings.

That the Romans forgot what it was to be Roman is perfectly consistent with—in fact, it is in some ways illustrative of—their increasing reliance on mercenaries. But the problem was more than just one of volunteer legionaries. The general malaise was a result of rampant high-level corruption, the moral failure of a once broad and civic-minded elite, onerous taxation, the destruction of independent farmers, and the inability to inculcate a common culture, language, and values among millions along the northern borders.

By contrast, the professionalization of the ranks (if that, rather than "alien," captures the meaning of Mr. Keiler's use of "mercenary") was a centuries-long process. The Roman Republic, remember, had expanded in the 1st century B.C.E. on the backs of a volunteer army; mercenary or not, the legions were superbly trained, enjoyed high morale, and had the support of the people. The process did not necessarily prove fatal until the 5th century when, for the deeper reasons I have cited, Roman society at large simply no longer believed in itself.

I share with Mr. Keiler certain worries about the current attitude of many Americans toward their armed forces; fortunately, from what I have seen of the enlisted ranks and officer corps, our soldiers seem more than willing to fight for the idea of America—and daily take on steep sacrifices, monetary and otherwise.

Craig S. Maxwell has misinterpreted me. In evoking both apparatchiks and the medieval Church, I hardly meant to suggest that the content of their thinking was alike, much less that it was similar to that of our current cultural elites. The linking idea, as he correctly notes, was "groupspeak." What led to the Reformation was not the brilliance of an Abelard or Aquinas but the bureaucracy, corruption, and hypocrisy of hundreds of thousands of lesser clergy who had lost their way and come to believe in empty ritual and public professions of piety rather than true spiritual guidance and public service.

I thank Ken Daniels for his kind encouragement, and I appreciate (even if I cannot always follow) his advice to ignore the "sanctimonious hypocrites" instead of dutifully confronting them. They really are an exhausting bunch.

Lingua Franca Iudaica

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin, a self-described old enemy of Yiddish turned Yiddish translator, advocates the homogenization of Jewish life through language ["The Great Jewish Language War," December 2002]. But that policy was an appalling mistake made by Zionists and defenders of the Diaspora alike. Given the limited ways in which these factions could differentiate themselves, the politicization of language can perhaps be understood, but members of both groups made a terrible blunder in fighting the language war. Continuing to argue for the old mistakes, as Mr. Halkin does, is to wage war against the phantoms of memory. The exercise now seems perverse.

The battle against Yiddish, which went beyond the Zionists' need to assert their superiority, was a shameful and destructive episode from which we have not yet recovered, and probably never will. For Mr. Halkin to suggest that one side—-the Yiddish Diaspora—was guilty of a "catastrophic misjudgment" is to confuse historical hindsight with political privilege.

His repetitive use of the metaphors that present Hebrew as a master and Yiddish as its servant/slave is particularly offensive to those like me who love both languages. Mr. Halkin's use and abuse of the old metaphor—Hebrew as the holy *loshn-koidesh*, Yiddish as the quotidian *mame-loshn*—borders on stereotypical absurdity. Master versus servant; husband versus wife; priestly caste versus plebeians—all these oppositions merely reflect Mr. Halkin's hierarchical judgments. If the culture was displaced and replaced and Yiddish is no longer a threat, why call Hebrew the master language, when there is no longer a slave to confirm that status?

With the exception of Hebrew itself, no other language produced the kind of cultural wealth that Yiddish gave to the Jews. The fight for a state by Zionists and the

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struggle for minority rights by Diaspora Jewry were worthy causes. But pitting one against the other by linking Hebrew to one and Yiddish to the other was a disgrace.

ADINA CIMET
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is right to say that "the great language war between Hebrew and Yiddish is over." But was there really such a war to begin with? From a historical perspective, it looks instead as if there were skirmishes between political ambitions; it was the Zionists' calculations and the Communists' manipulations that contributed to the appearance of war.

My grandmother was a Hebrew teacher, my mother spoke Yiddish, and the two tongues coexisted very peacefully. On the grassroots level, it seems, there was no war.

IZAK B. DIMENSTEIN
La Grange, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin once again illuminates, as few can do, the terrain of language and literature. But when the dust settles, one verity remains: the lingua franca of the Jews in 2003 is neither Hebrew nor Yiddish; it is English.

JEROME A. CHANES
Barnard College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin fails to discuss the pronunciation of Hebrew in Israel. From 1926 to 1932, I attended a Talmud Torah school in Amsterdam where we were taught both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi pronunciations of Hebrew. I thought the Sephardi version sounded flattened and impoverished compared with the Ashkenazi. Read a piece of biblical poetry like the Song of Songs, and hear how in Ashkenazi pronunciation it runs up and down through a spectrum of vowels, an effect mostly lost in Sephardi. Furthermore, the Masoretic diacritical vowel marks seem to fit the Ashkenazi better. Why then has the Sephardi way been accepted in Israel? Were not most of the state's founders Ashkenazi?

HERMAN J. VAN NORDEN
Vancouver, Canada

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

If any proof were needed that I was right to state in my article that "the attitudes of Yiddishism live on," Adina Cimet has been kind enough to supply it. In arguing that Yiddishism in the first half of the 20th century represented a "catastrophic misjudgment," I have, she says, confused "historical hindsight with political privilege." Let us translate her words into plain English.

Just because, Adina Cimet is telling us, there is now a state of Israel with five million Hebrew-speaking Jews in it; and just because the Yiddishists were anti-Zionists who scoffed at the prospects of such a state and did their best to prevent it; and just because they failed to foresee the catastrophe of European Jewry that Zionism repeatedly predicted; and just because the Stalinist regime of Soviet Russia, viewed by many of them as the shining hope of the Jewish people, turned out to be a monstrous persecutor of the Jews; and just because the Yiddish language, the massive fostering of which was promoted by Yiddishism as the best and wisest investment in the Jewish future, died long ago as a living medium of culture not only in Nazi-occupied Europe and Soviet Russia (where it was rapidly losing ground even in those years when the Communist government most supported it), but also in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, and other free countries in which the Yiddishist movement, starting from a position of strength, was free to carry out its program—in spite of all this, Adina Cimet maintains, we must not say that the Yiddishists were wrong and that their Hebraist and Zionist opponents were right. Oh, no. That would be cheap historical hindsight. It was all just a blind flip of the coin that could just as easily have gone the other way. Let us therefore agree that everyone was right, and that everyone made "blunders," and that Hebraists and Yiddishists should never have been so petty as to quarrel in the first place.

But neither Hebraists nor Yiddishists were petty. They knew very well what Adina Cimet pretends not to know, namely, that they were fighting a real political and cultural battle over the future of the Jewish people, and that their hopes and predictions for this future were so radically different that there was no possibility of agreement between them. Perhaps Adina Cimet regrets the outcome of this battle. Perhaps, given the choice, she would gladly trade the state of Israel for a Communist Europe dotted with local varieties of Birobidzhan—the official name of which, readers may need to be reminded, was the Jewish Autonomous Region of the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics. But if this is so, she should have the courage to say so, instead of accusing me of "perverse exercises," or of wanting to "homogenize Jewish life" (where on earth did I call for such a thing?), or of indulging in "offensive" metaphors that, as my article made clear, were not my own but traditional ones used by many Hebrew and Yiddish writers to describe—sometimes approvingly and sometimes in protest—the nature of the relationship between the two languages.

To Izak B. Dimenstein, I can only add to the above by saying: yes, you are right. It was "the Zionists' calculations and the Communists' manipulations" that made the Hebrew-Yiddish war so bitter. And, fortunately, the Zionists' calculations proved correct and the Communists' manipulations ultimately failed. Where would we be today had the opposite happened?

Jerome A. Chanes is of course right, too. Hebrew's triumph in Israel has, ironically, been paralleled by its collapse as a language widely used by Diaspora Jews and its replacement by English as a medium of international Jewish communication. But I suspect that Mr. Chanes would agree with me that this has grim implications for Jewish culture in the Diaspora, and that Jewish communities whose intellectuals lack a functional knowledge of Hebrew are communities in serious danger of being cut off from the creative sources of the Jewish past.

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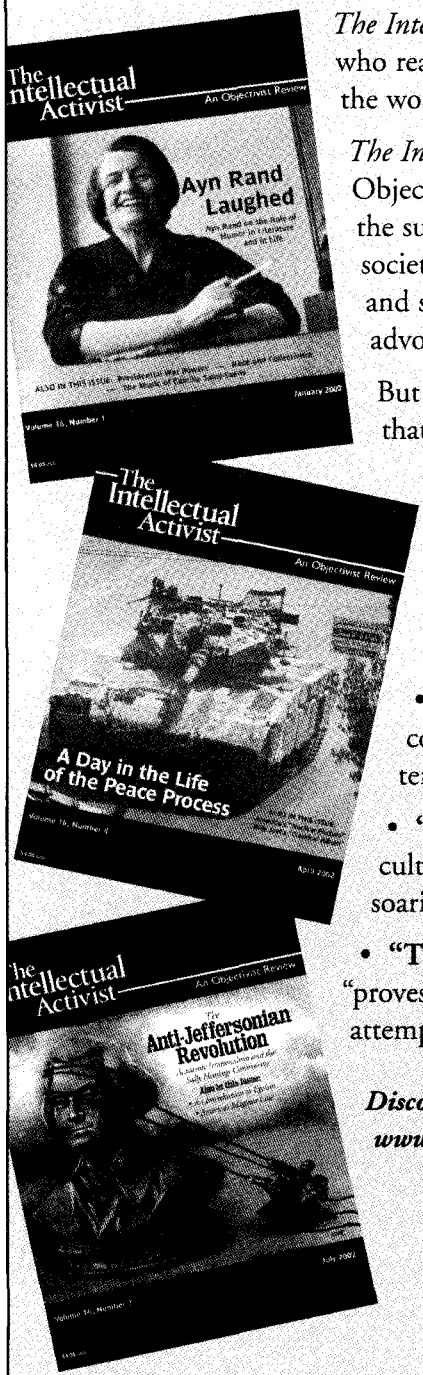

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The Intellectual Activist
An Objectivist Review

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tandum: I would not argue with Herman J. van Norden about whether Ashkenazi Hebrew or Sephardi Hebrew is more pleasing to the ear, especially since the so-called "Sephardi" pronunciation of Israeli Hebrew has many Ashkenazi elements in it (such as, for example, the Israeli *resh* or "r"). Nor is he entirely correct about the vowel marks: while certain vocalic distinctions indicated by these marks are better preserved in East-European Hebrew, others are more clearly differentiated in the Israeli pronunciation. In any case, the subject of why Israeli Hebrew sounds the way it does, and of how it came to be the standard speech of Israel, is too complicated to be treated here and deserves a separate article.

Bad News

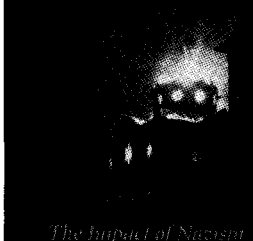
TO THE EDITOR:

In a letter responding to Ruth R. Wisse's "On Ignoring Anti-Semitism," J.P. Hannon claims that "contrary to researchers like David S. Wyman," during the period "before the Nazi implementation of the Holocaust," two *New York Times* correspondents "did write feature articles [about the persecution of European Jews] that were not hidden in small print on the back pages" [Letters from Readers, January].

Nowhere in my book about the pre-Holocaust period, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (1968), did I claim that during those years news about the persecution of European Jewry was hidden. In *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (1984), I did address the failure of the *Times* and other major American newspapers adequately to cover news of the Nazi mass murder of the Jews in the 1940's. I concluded that the *Times* had "printed a substantial amount of information on Holocaust-related events but almost always buried it on inner pages." There were many reasons the media treated this systematic murder as minor news: skepticism resulting from fabricated stories of World War I atrocities, the dominance of war news, and editors' fears that they would be accused of sensationalism. Added to these factors, the *Times* was, as I put it, "Jewish-owned but anxious not to be seen as Jewish-oriented."

America's refusal to admit substantial numbers of Jewish refugees during the 1930's was the result of anti-immigration sentiment that was exacerbated by unemployment, nativism, and anti-Semitism; it was not the result of the press burying news of the Jews' plight. During the 1940's, by contrast, news about the Nazi mass murder of the Jews was indeed often "hidden in small print on the back pages." The resulting lack of public awareness greatly hindered efforts by rescue activists to bring about a change in the Roosevelt administration's policies toward European Jews.

DAVID S. WYMAN
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts



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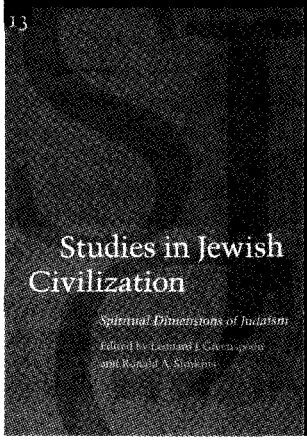

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CONTROVERSY

Darwinism Versus Intelligent Design

David Berlinski & Critics

PAUL R. GROSS:

Congratulations are in order. In his latest COMMENTARY essay on "Darwinism"—as it is often called by those who do not know much evolutionary biology—David Berlinski seems to have reversed himself ["Has Darwin Met His Match?," December 2002]. He is now critical of the effort to rehabilitate the ancient "argument from design," these days holiday-wrapped as "intelligent-design theory." This change of mind is all the more praiseworthy because Mr. Berlinski is not only the author of "The Deniable Darwin" (COMMENTARY, June 1996) but, according to his current author's note, closely associated with the Discovery Institute, the conservative Christian think tank that serves as the primary promoter of "intelligent design."

The manner of Mr. Berlinski's dismissal is less creditable, however. His argument might be paraphrased as follows: intelligent design has failed, evolutionary biology has failed, and therefore nobody has a plausible scientific explanation for the diversity of life on earth. This is absurd.

The reasons Mr. Berlinski gives for the failure of intelligent-design theory have all been given before—in the professional literature, in the introductory biology courses of all decent colleges, in half a dozen very recent specialist books, on fifty flourishing scientific websites. However well intelligent-design apologetics is doing as politics, there is nothing new about its abject failure as science.

On the other hand, none of the reasons Mr. Berlinski hints at for rejecting "Darwinism" stand up. They are the familiar creationist pabulum, supposedly demonstrating the grand flaws and gaps in evolutionary biology. But these arguments, too, have been addressed in the professional literature, in tens of thousands of papers, and in dozens of excellent, best-selling popular science books—and they have been soundly refuted. Unfortunately, a non-biologist reader of "Has Darwin Met His Match?," innocent of this vast body of knowledge, will have no notion of its content or even, perhaps, of its existence, and may therefore take Mr. Berlinski's assertions as true as well as deep, which they are not.

Mr. Berlinski says that the argument from design has been taken up again in evolutionary biology and mathematical physics. This, if true, would give it some scientific seriousness. But it is not true. There is not one publication in recent biological journals, out of the tens of thousands of articles published annually—a huge subset of them devoted specifically to evolution—that undertakes to rehabilitate the argument from design. None of the intelligent-design "theorists" mentioned in his essay has ever published the claim in an original article in a regular, refereed biological journal. Nor, of course, has Mr. Berlinski himself done so.

As for William Dembski's lucubrations on chance and probability—which even Mr. Berlinski now finds flawed—I know of no professional publications (other than Dembski's own books and his frenetic responses to critics) that treat them as of interest for mathematical physics. There are, however, a dozen point-by-point refutations of those claims, many of them available on the Internet, by well-known physicists, philosophers, mathematicians, and biologists.

University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

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MARK PERAKH:

What is perhaps most amusing about David Berlinski's article is his apparent change of mind on the subject of intelligent design. Having supplied rave blurbs to the books of such prominent advocates of this "theory" as William Dembski and Michael Behe, he now casts doubt on the concepts they promote. What explains this new view? The advocates of intelligent design are anxious to be taken seriously as scientists. From their standpoint, it may seem to be a step forward that Mr. Berlinski gives their ideas a status equal to that of Darwinism, even if only by casting doubts on both equally.

The list of unsubstantiated assertions in Mr. Berlinski's paper is long. Though enviably eloquent, it adds nothing to the debate other than to try to put the failed hypothesis of intelligent design on a par with genuine science.

Bonsall, California

JASON ROSENHOUSE:

David Berlinski's arguments against intelligent-design theory suffer only from a lack of originality; critics have been making the same points for years. Still, he gives a good picture of why most scientists find this field unpromising.

Mr. Berlinski's ongoing antipathy to mainstream biology, by contrast, is based on a caricature. Blubbering about gaps in the fossil record cannot change the fact that, with millions of fossils collected and classified, not one is out of place from a Darwinian standpoint. Also, Darwinism requires continuity at the level of the genotype, not the phenotype. And while it is true that information is independent of the medium containing it, there is nothing mysterious about the idea that changing the medium can alter the information. Genes do mutate, thereby coding for different proteins from before, and new functions are sometimes observed to arise as a result. The source of the code is indeed mysterious, a fact that would be troubling if Darwinism were a theory about the origins of life. Since it is not, Mr. Berlinski's hand-wringing on the subject is inappropriate.

The fruits of evolutionary theory are disseminated in thousands of research articles in dozens of journals every year. Obviously, the people charged with the responsibility of entering their labs and solving problems find it useful. Numerous complex systems have been studied and the major steps of their evolution revealed. Where data are copious, they are all in accord with Darwinian expectations; where mysteries remain, the problem is a lack of data, not a lack of theoretical robustness.

In response to all this, intelligent-design theorists fold their arms and shake their heads. That is their right. But for all their bloated claims and hyperbolic rhetoric, they have made no contribution toward solving an actual biological problem. For that matter, neither has David Berlinski.

Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas

CLAY SHIRKY:

David Berlinski expends a lot of energy trying to make evolutionary theory look like religion. He mentions Darwin often and gestures toward a set of beliefs called "Darwinism," as if Darwin were some sort of high priest and Darwinism a sect. But biologists do not practice "Darwinism" any more than physicists practice "Einsteinism." For biologists, *The Origin of Species* is a historical work, not a how-to manual.

Unlike Berlinski's "Darwinism," evolutionary theory is a field of vigorous and current debate. Darwin had no idea how heredity worked—it took fifty years for R.A. Fisher and his colleagues to relate Darwin's work to Mendel's. Darwin likewise had no explanation for altruism—it took a hundred years and the work of William Hamilton to develop a plausible hypothesis. And there are still myriad open questions today.

Mr. Berlinski does not mention Fisher or Hamilton or any of the other thousands of biologists exploring these open questions because he is anxious to present evolutionary theory as a fixed philosophy rather than a dynamic science. Indeed, the only publishing biologist he mentions is Jonathan Wells, the Unification minister whose prayers and conversations with the Rev. Sun Myung Moon convinced him, in Wells's own words, "that I should devote my life to destroying Darwinism," which he reports as his spur for studying biology.

But no matter how vivid his theological motivations may be, Wells (or indeed anyone in the intelligent-design camp) will eventually have to offer an alternative explanation of the variety we see among living things that does not rely on the key evolutionary idea of descent with modification. Furthermore, that explanation will have to be tested, and those tests will have to be scientific, not religious.

Here even Mr. Berlinski gets off the intelligent-design bus, because he can see where it is heading. If the only way to defeat a scientific hypothesis is with another scientific hypothesis, then we will never get to what he seemingly wants: a world where science stops trying to explain things. He likes intelligent design for criticizing evolutionary theory, but he dislikes it because it is itself too much like science, and may end up having to make testable assertions in the domain of what he calls "the ineffable inimitable."

Because he cannot get his hands on the steering wheel, Mr. Berlinski reaches for the brakes, asserting that a large domain of interest is or should be permanently exempt from scientific inquiry. This has been a standard plea of the religious for the last several centuries, and Mr. Berlinski's formulation—that the search for "the ineffable inimitable" is fruitless—is a classic of the genre. History has not been kind to those

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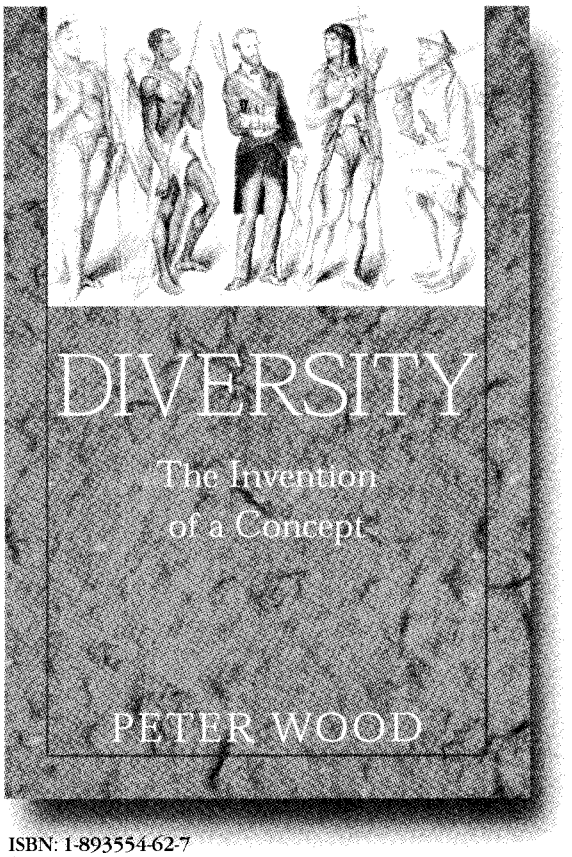
DIVERSITY



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who predict an end to scientific progress, and declare God to be the sole possible explanation for the remaining mysteries.

Brooklyn, New York

S.L. BACCUS:

Intelligent-design theory can be summed up, as best I can determine, by two propositions: there is a creator and evolutionary theory is false. Its advocates do not believe the creator is sophisticated enough to have created our universe in such a complex way. It appears they would prefer a magician, waving a wand and shouting magical words of creation.

Nor should one overlook that the creator, as defined by Mr. Berlinski and his associates at the Discovery Institute's Center for Science & Culture (CSC), is the Christian God. The group's ultimate goal appears to be getting Christian beliefs taught in our schools. In his book, *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism* (2000), Phillip E. Johnson writes,

> The proper metaphysical basis for science is not naturalism or materialism but the fact that the creator of the cosmos not only created an intelligible universe but also created the powers of reasoning which enable us to conduct scientific investigations. . . . [T]he materialist story thrives only as long as it does not confront the biblical story directly. . . . So it is of the greatest importance that we ask the question: "Has God *done* something to give us a start in the right direction, or has He left us alone and on our own?" When we have reached that point in our questioning, we will inevitably encounter the person of Jesus Christ, the one who has been declared the incarnate Word of God, and through whom all things came into existence.

In the mission statement on its website, the CSC bends over backward to avoid appearing as the Christian creationist group that it is. It is only in written material and speeches for Christian audiences that its representatives admit their real beliefs and goals.

Houston, Texas

MORTON ROSOFF:

Like creationists, David Berlinski targets natural selection in his critique of Darwinian theory, oblivious to other mechanisms of evolution that Darwin never knew about: pseudogenes, genetic drift, symbiosis, chromosomal rearrangements, interbreeding, developmental proteins, etc.

"Creation science," a slick variation of creationism, seeks to transport philosophical and theological ideas into a scientific program to investigate intelligent design, but offers no empirical evidence, no models, no verifiable predictions, no possibility of correction or elaboration. It is not intended to improve our knowledge or extend scientific horizons but to support religious faith.

The writers whose work Mr. Berlinski describes propose a version of the "anthropic principle": that the universe and its fundamental parameters must be such as to admit the creation of observers. The tautological foundation of this idea is that observers find themselves in universes that allow them to observe. It is only a short step from here to intelligent design, the advocates of which have expressed theological inclinations.

It is true that science has its own philosophical or faith-like underpinnings. They consist of methodological tools like Occam's Razor (don't invent unnecessary entities to explain something), falsification (can a hypothesis, in principle, be falsified?), and balance (extraordinary claims need extraordinary evidence). These devices have served science with great success for 300 years.

Yonkers, New York

MATT YOUNG:

Considering the great number of biologists whom David Berlinski charges with failing to read Dan E. Nilsson and Suzanne Pelger's paper on the evolution of the mammalian eye, I am flattered that he singled me, a physicist, out for criticism. It is Mr. Berlinski, however, not the biologists or I, who suffer, as he writes, from "an inability to read the literature."

In describing the paper by Nilsson and Pelger (not Pilger, as Mr. Berlinski misidentifies her), I wrote that they had performed a computer simulation of the development of the eye. I did not write, as Mr. Berlinski suggests, that they used nothing more than random variation and natural selection, and I know of no reference that says they did.

Mr. Berlinski's complaint that they described an eyeball, not an eye, is typical of those who tilt at neo-Darwinism. If Nilsson and Pelger had simulated the development of the light-sensitive patch with which they started, Mr. Berlinski would have asked where the original cells came from, and so on back to primordial ooze. Criticizing what we know about biology by harping on what we do not know is like criticizing a sturdy, durable, and functional concrete wall because there are chinks in it.

The paper by Nilsson and Pelger is a sophisticated simulation that even includes quantum noise; it is not, contrary to Mr. Berlinski's assertion, a back-of-the-envelope calculation. It begins with a flat, light-sensitive patch, which they allow to become concave in increments of 1 percent, calculating the visual acuity along the way. When some other mechanism will improve acuity faster, they allow, at various stages, the formation of a graded-index lens and an iris, and then optimize the focus. Unless Nilsson and Pelger performed the calculations in closed form or by hand, theirs was, as I wrote, a "computer simulation." Computer-*aided* simulation might have been a slightly better description, but not enough to justify Mr. Berlinski's sarcasm at my expense.

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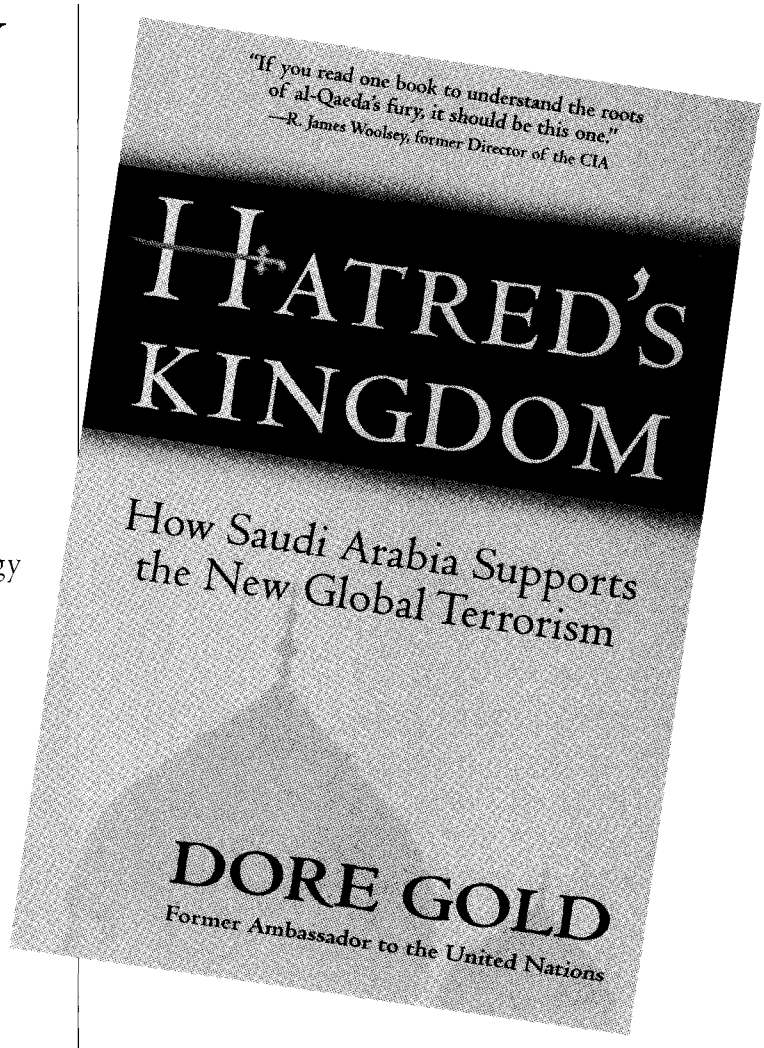
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More important, had Mr. Berlinski read more carefully, he would have recognized that Nilsson and Pelger's accomplishment was not to "flog" a collection of cells up an adaptive peak, "a point," he writes, "never at issue because never in doubt." Rather, they showed that the required time was geologically short—a point very much at issue among Mr. Berlinski and his neo-creationist colleagues.

Colorado School of Mines
Golden, Colorado

TONY DOYLE:

Although David Berlinski offers sharp criticisms of the theory of intelligent design, he is inclined to pull punches. First, he leaves unchallenged Phillip E. Johnson's claim that naturalism is "wholly extra-scientific" and thus no more justified than the theological account offered by those who would maintain that the organic world presents compelling evidence of design. This is misleading. Naturalists simply contend that, for any event or phenomenon that needs explaining, we should seek only physical causes.

This is not dogma. We have a robust idea of physical causation, supported by countless examples; time and again, the search for physical causes and only physical causes has paid off. By contrast, we do not have a clue about how the theist's non-physical "causation" is supposed to work. The appeal to nonphysical causes, to which intelligent-design theory is committed, amounts to an appeal to ignorance.

Mr. Berlinski rejects William Dembski's version of the argument from design, but he is well disposed toward Dembski's "very plausible general premise":

> [E]vents that can be explained neither by the laws of physics nor by chance must be explained by an appeal to the intervention of an intelligent agent. It is surely plain that many events cannot be explained in terms of the laws of mathematical physics, or any other laws for that matter. The precise way in which Shakespeare arranged 113 words to fashion his [eighteenth] sonnet ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day . . . ") owes nothing to any system of physical laws.

Not so fast. Shakespeare presumably moved his hand while composing those immortal lines. Hand movements are physical, so they have fully physical explanations, like any other physical event. It follows that they are strictly governed by the laws of physics; hence they are physically explicable. Of course this sort of explanation might not interest us much. We might prefer to know something about the person who inspired the lines or whether the poet penned the verse in July swelter. But this does not mean that his composition owed "nothing to any system of physical laws" or that we need to appeal to a divine "intelligent agent" to explain his behavior. The only eligible intelligent agent was Shakespeare himself, physical from head to toe.

Besides, suppose for the sake of argument that we cannot in principle explain physically how poetic inspiration produces a sonnet. Just how is a non-natural or supernatural agent supposed to help us? Can the theist explain how God is capable of creating self-conscious beings who occasionally write gorgeous love poems? Doesn't positing a designer or agent here just multiply mysteries?

New York City

CHRIS BEALL:

David Berlinski leaves untouched the major contradiction at the heart of the intelligent-design argument. Intelligent-design advocates want to have it both ways. On the one hand, they claim that wherever we find a very complex and ingeniously arranged organ, we have evidence of both design and a designer. From the design we can clearly infer the designer's purpose—to make an organ that serves its owner well. Astonishing engineering to an obvious purpose surely tells us that we are looking at the work of a purposeful designer.

But the world in which organisms really live consists, primarily, of other organisms. And some organisms have organs that are very complex and ingeniously arranged so as to do the work of killing or parasitizing other organisms. Their potential victims have equally complex organs whose purpose is clear—to evade, fight off, or endure the insults enabled by their enemies' ingenious designs. What is the purpose of a designer working out clever mechanisms for organisms to work so hard to take and kill, keep and survive?

At this point, design advocates retreat into mysticism. The designer, it turns out, works in mysterious ways, and his purposes are beyond us. But the problem with the mysterious designer should be obvious. It is from his purposefulness, not just his skill, that we should infer his existence, yet when his work is examined at a scale greater than a single organism, he appears to be working at cross-purposes.

The remaining mystery is that these contradictions, which logically weaken the claims of design advocates, seem instead to strengthen their conviction. This is cleared up by a simple observation: when belief grows as evidence wanes, we can be certain we are not dealing with science and uncertain knowledge, but with religion and certain faith. While there is nothing wrong with proclamations of faith, we are under no obligation to consider them serious contributions to our attempt to understand how the world really works.

Lafayette, Colorado

GEORGE C. WILLIAMS:

Though I do think the Reverend William Paley's approach a good one—for information about the Creator, examine creation—David Berlinski seriously understates God's

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Partisan Review

Winter 2003

"I put much hope in the European Union. I think that if the post-communist states had been admitted to membership a couple of years ago, the present and future Europe would be safer. . . . This waiting and expecting is humiliating the people and making them more frustrated."

—Eda Kriseova

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less attractive features. It is an impressive universe out there, so that calling God *almighty* is appropriate. Calling Him *good* I will briefly deal with below. Calling Him *wise* was Paley's emphasis—as it is of recent anti-Darwin critics like Phillip E. Johnson—and is what I want to discuss here.

There are two ways of evaluating functional designs: according to their general plan or according to the quantitative precision of their parts. The second approach gives impressive positive results. We have come to understand the functional precision of such eye measurements as the distance from the lens to the retina, the dimensions and shape of the lens, etc. The eye is of nearly optimum dimensions.

As for general design features, consider two: our upside-down retinas and the number of our eyes. The retinal orientation is the result of its embryonic origin and positioning in a tiny and nearly transparent ancestor of all vertebrates. When descendants of this early ancestor got big enough for the upside-down retina to be disadvantageous, the problem was partly solved by making the blood vessels and other services between the retina and the lens as thin and transparent as possible. As for having just two eyes: it orients them optimally in relation to such conflicting ecological needs as distance perception and breadth of coverage. We have excellent distance perception because our arboreal ancestors maximized their ability to judge the distance to the next tree branch. Unfortunately, having merely two forward-pointing eyes is seriously deficient in seeing what may be sneaking up behind.

All our adaptations and those of other organisms are similarly compromised by historical constraints. Adaptive changes can come only by natural selection altering quantitative variables such as size and shape (or numbers when they are large, like scale rows of fishes).

As I argue in my book *Plan and Purpose in Nature* (1996), Paley was right that a scientific treatment of the creation can turn theology into a rigorous science. As noted above, God can make elaborate biological adaptations by trial-and-error selection, but it never occurs to Him to alter the basic plan. So He is stupid! Is He good? The answer is obvious from any objective evaluation of His biological creation. Go out into the woods and note the ratios of success to failure, of happiness to fear and pain. As Thomas Huxley recognized in his 1893 lecture "Evolution and Ethics," the Creator is clearly evil.

South Setauket, New York

KARL WESSEL:

In his critique of philosophical naturalism, David Berlinski fails to see that restricting scientific research to material causes and effects must follow as the immediate logical consequence of a position he himself defends in his article: that the intentions of supernatural beings cannot provide the basis of any falsifiable, or even testable, theories. Indeed, what *if* God is capable, as Mr. Berlinski writes, of "inadvertence, anger, mockery, incompetence" and so on? What if he is a surrealist painter? Whatever hypothesis is capable of explaining everything perforce explains nothing, which is why the intelligent-design movement resembles nothing so much as an obsessive hamster entertaining itself on an exercise wheel.

Of course, it is still possible that intelligent-design theory might explain the bare fact of the world's seeming design—which brings us to Mr. Berlinski's discussion of William Dembski's theory of complex specified information. Here he makes the obvious but important observation that specifications are human gestures.

Dembski often argues as if the passage from conventional kinds of specification involving, for example, archers and targets to the physical or biological patterns that chiefly concern him follows an untroubled continuum of inductive inference. Inductions are never untroubled, however, because they always depend on the human judgment that all of the examples to be tested in an experiment are sufficiently similar to warrant being included in the test set. From our observations of sparrows, pigeons, and blue jays we may feel entitled to infer that all feathered bipeds fly; but then we discover ostriches and kiwis. The question then becomes what the *relevant* analogy is; but relevance, unfortunately for Dembski's theory, is a very large concept that probably cannot be formalized.

As for Michael Behe, another intelligent-design prophet, Mr. Berlinski avers in reference to his work that "the origins of irreducibly complex biological systems remain . . . an utter mystery." The only mystery here is why Mr. Berlinski has failed to read the scientific literature relevant to this problem in the last five years. In a series of articles in *Science* and elsewhere, Albert Barabasi and his colleagues have shown that a scale-free, power-law topology is ubiquitous in the genomic regulatory, protein-interaction, and metabolic networks of the cells of dozens of organisms.

These biochemical networks are irreducibly complex in exactly the sense Behe intends: when the most highly connected nodes are removed from them they stop functioning. Because they neither develop nor evolve following Behe's naive assembly-line model, however, this fact is perfectly irrelevant. Rather, they increase in complexity over time in response to chance symmetry-breaking processes—in particular through gene duplication, which causes the preferential attachment of certain nodes to each other within the network, thereby producing the characteristic topology.

At least it is good to see Mr. Berlinski backpedaling from his 1996 COMMENTARY article, "The

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Deniable Darwin." At this rate, by 2008 he may even backpedal into the truth.

Rancho Palos Verdes, California

Alexander Eterman:

The intelligent-design theorists discussed by David Berlinski have their work cut out for them. They must decide whether the designer monitored his creation for a long time—possibly to this day—intervening in its workings, or whether he detached himself immediately upon the "launch." If the presumed designer has long since detached himself from his creation, it is crucial to determine whether he left it to its own devices, like an animal set free, or provided it with an in-built long-playing program that predetermined its operations, the way we leave the computer on over the weekend, having programmed it to perform certain calculations.

Before a design theoretician pits his strength against Darwin, he should express his own narrative in an intelligible manner. Thus, he should specify whether the evolution of biological species (regardless of its exact mechanism) took place at all, or whether the different species were produced by the designer gradually and independently of one another, or, perhaps, whether they all appeared simultaneously and went on in peaceful coexistence until some of them gradually became extinct.

If he accepts an evolutionary process of any kind, he must decide that blind natural selection is capable of creating things that are new and sensible or, on the contrary, that any biological change of the slightest complexity is the outcome of enlightened design. The proponent of design theory will most likely reject the suggestion that the mammalian eye is the product of natural selection; yet he might concede that the hearing apparatus of mammals evolved in a natural fashion, with no outside help; or at least that the Indian and African elephants, so similar and yet so different, are two naturally divergent branches of the same tree, rather than the product of a sophisticated design.

In short, a hypothesis of biological design must be built not merely as a negation of the theory of natural selection but as a series of diachronically expanded theoretical models of design, consistent in all of their links. It should be noted that building such a hypothesis is a thankless task, in the course of which a good half of "designers" empirically go over to the evolutionist side.

Jerusalem, Israel

Geoffrey Kent:

David Berlinski purports to present evidence showing that the natural world is the result of necessity or chance, rather than design, and at the end of his article pronounces the ideas of those espousing intelligent design to be moribund. Though I find it difficult to defend the ideas with which Mr. Berlinski takes issue, I do not really think that he has proved anything, either—nor could he by reference only to the natural world.

Theoretical physicists now believe that our universe is one of an infinite number of universes that are constantly being created—that it exists, in effect, as a bubble formed from some other universe. Accordingly, it is entirely consistent with chance that the charges assigned to the subatomic particles that formed the material foundation of our universe at the "time" of the Big Bang should be the only charges (within a very small variation) that would sustain our universe for a sufficient period of time to permit the development of intelligent life.

Even given the extremely low probability that the particles would have the proper charges following the Big Bang, it is not improbable that, with an infinite number of universes and an infinite period of time, one explosion would eventually take place which would support a universe that would not either collapse back on itself or expand at such a tremendous velocity that no orderly development of stars and galaxies could ever take place.

That is precisely the problem with the argument that chance disproves design. Chance exists only within a limited period of time and space; it cannot exist in infinity. In this case, chance *is* the design. And the designer, if there is one, may exist outside time and space, outside our universe, outside any universe.

Chappaqua, New York

Jonathan Wells:

David Berlinski's "Has Darwin Met His Match?" is a breath of fresh air. Darwinism has become a sort of anti-religion, and defenders of the faith tend to demonize unbelievers rather than try to understand what they are actually saying. As a result, Darwinists typically distort intelligent-design theory—the latest and most powerful challenge to their orthodoxy—beyond recognition. Though a critic of intelligent-design theory, Mr. Berlinski is no Darwinist, and he is refreshingly fair-minded in his analysis.

I think Mr. Berlinski is mistaken, however, in characterizing the work that I and others have done as an attempt to resurrect William Paley's natural theology. Paley argued that design proves the existence of the Christian deity, but I, for one, have never been convinced by his argument. Design necessarily entails a designer; but the Christian deity is much more than a designer, and additional premises and evidences must be adduced to prove His existence. I happen to believe in the God of Moses and Jesus, but my belief is based on much more than design.

The basic issue for intelligent-design theorists is not whether design gets us to God, but whether design is real. Darwinists contend that it is not. For example, Richard Dawkins, in *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), argues that though organ-

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isms are "complicated things" and "give the appearance of having been designed," "the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design." Dawkins's claim is false, despite the Darwinists' mantra that they have "overwhelming evidence" for their theory. I pointed this out in my book, *Icons of Evolution* (2000), and Mr. Berlinski agrees, writing that Darwinism is little more than a "fantastic extrapolation" in which the mechanism responsible for some minor changes within species "is read into the global record of life itself."

The evidence of evolution does *not* reveal a universe without design, and it remains a possibility that some features of living things really are designed. Intelligent-design theorists like Michael Behe and William Dembski have proposed ways to determine which features are designed and which are not. Mr. Berlinski argues that they have not succeeded. In any case, though, their proposals for establishing criteria to detect design are not attempts to prove the existence of the Christian deity.

If intelligent-design theory really were a reincarnation of Paley's natural theology, then Mr. Berlinski might be right that it is in danger of collapsing without a glimpse into the inscrutable mind of God. But it is not. It is an attempt to give a better explanation than chance and necessity for what our senses tell us is evidence for design in living things. In that light, it is poor Darwin who is (as Mr. Berlinski declares of Paley) "dead at last, or at least not very vigorously alive."

Discovery Institute
Seattle, Washington

MICHAEL J. BEHE:

I always find David Berlinski's writing delightful, and I agree with much that he says in "Has Darwin Met His Match?" Specific claims about how life arose in the murky past should always be examined skeptically, especially if accompanied by grand philosophizing. On the other hand, the fact that much remains mysterious does not mean we cannot conclude anything at all with reasonable certainty.

On the general question of the sufficiency of unintelligent physical processes to produce the astonishing complexity of life, I think a negative answer is justified, for reasons I gave in my book, *Darwin's Black Box* (1995). I quite agree with Mr. Berlinski that my argument against Darwinism does not add up to a logical proof. No argument that rests on empirical observations can have such force. Yet—despite my sloppy prose in suggesting that, "by definition," irreducibly complex systems cannot be approached gradually—I intended the argument to be a scientific one, not a purely logical one. In a scientific argument, conclusions are tentative, based on the preponderance of the physical evidence, and potentially falsifiable.

Here is my thumbnail sketch of the modern design argument as I see it: either unintelligent processes can explain all of life or they cannot. Virtually everyone (including Darwinists) agrees that life *appears* to be intelligently designed. The only physical mechanism ever proposed that could plausibly mimic design is Darwinian natural selection. Yet, as I have argued, the irreducible complexity of biochemical systems is a barrier to direct evolutionary construction by natural selection, leaving Darwinists to hope for circuitous, indirect routes. No plausible indirect routes have been proposed, let alone experimentally demonstrated.

That leaves us with biological features that look designed, but only promissory notes for how they can be explained by unintelligent processes. What's more, we know why the features we see in biological systems look designed: they are at once functional and very unlikely—exactly what William Dembski, whose work Mr. Berlinski also discusses, means by his phrase "specified complexity." They look designed for the same reason that nonbiological artifacts like mousetraps look designed, and non-design explanations have turned out to be so much bluster.

It seems reasonable to me to conclude, while acknowledging our fallibility, that at least some features of life were really designed by an intelligent agent.

Lehigh University
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI:

David Berlinski provides a clear and popular summary of my work on the theoretical basis for detecting design in nature. He also articulates several criticisms of my work. As it turns out, I specifically formulated my theory to meet the concerns that he raises. I am thus grateful for the opportunity to clarify several key points about my theory.

(1) As Mr. Berlinski explains, central to my theory of design detection are the twin notions of small probability and specification. I argue that highly improbable events that conform to independently given patterns are correctly attributed to intelligent design. Mr. Berlinski correctly points out, however, that some patterns are subjectively imposed upon events (or perceived in events) and do not justify inferring design. He is absolutely correct as far as he goes.

But he misses a critical distinction in my work. In *The Design Inference* (1998), I explain that there are artificially constructed patterns—I call them fabrications—that do not justify design inferences. There are other kinds of patterns that I call specifications, and these, in the presence of small-probability events, *do* justify design inferences. Moreover, I show that there is a clear way to distinguish specifications from fabrications. Specifications are patterns that, in the parlance of probabilists, are conditionally independent of the outcomes that they characterize and that, in the parlance of complexity

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theorists, exhibit a low minimum-description length (see www.mdl-research.org). Fabrications fail this test.

The distinction between specifications and fabrications is readily illustrated. Consider an archer who shoots at a target. If the target is fixed and the archer repeatedly hits the bull's-eye, then we rightly draw a design inference by attributing skill to the archer. On the other hand, if the target is movable and always moves to where the arrow lands, then we may not draw a design inference by attributing skill to the archer. In the latter case, the target is a fabrication, in the former a specification.

(2) Mr. Berlinski is right that probabilities sometimes cannot be objectively assigned to various events. But sometimes they can be. And sometimes, when exact probabilities cannot be assigned, credible upper bounds can be. This suffices for a design inference. Sometimes probabilities can be determined on theoretical grounds. Sometimes they can be determined only on empirical grounds, as by running experiments or performing computer simulations. Assigning probabilities to biological systems to determine whether they are designed is an exciting area of research opened up by intelligent design.

(3) Throughout my writings I stress that the absence of specified improbability cannot rule out design, because a designing intelligence can act carelessly, or even deliberately, in ways that do not produce specified events of small probability. For instance, I might deliberately tip an inkwell so that the resulting ink stain is indistinguishable from a random accident. But with that same ink I might also spell a Shakespearean sonnet. In the latter case, the resulting ink "stain" would exhibit specified improbability and could not reasonably be referred to chance.

Thus, while I have always conceded that specified improbability is not a necessary condition for design, I have consistently argued that specified improbability is a sufficient condition for it. Mr. Berlinski argues against this, but his argument hinges on a failure to distinguish specifications from fabrications.

(4) According to Mr. Berlinski, highly improbable events happen "precisely as many times as one might expect, given their probabilities." This claim is easily disproved by flipping a coin a thousand times. The probability of the sequence you get is around one in ten raised to the 300th power. How often should you have expected this sequence to occur? Not at all! With all the elementary particles in the universe furiously flipping coins for trillions of years, the expected waiting time for a given sequence places it well beyond the predicted heat death (or big crunch) of the universe.

I still hope to persuade Mr. Berlinski that his concerns about detecting design can be (or have already been) satisfactorily addressed. In any case, he has identified several key issues raised by my theory, and I look forward to the critical conversation that his piece will engender in the design-theoretic research community.

Baylor University
Waco, Texas

PAUL A. NELSON:

As an admirer of David Berlinski's intellectual stubbornness and independence, I welcome his critical scrutiny of the theory of intelligent design. No theory was ever improved by being coddled.

Still, when Mr. Berlinski writes that design theorists "underestimate the enduring intellectual force behind [Jacques] Monod's claim that the categories of chance and necessity are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive," I must note that Monod himself did not rely solely on these categories. No sane human being does. The argument of Monod's masterpiece, *Chance and Necessity* (1970), leans heavily on the notion of "teleonomy," which he defines as a "characteristic property" of organisms as "objects endowed with a purpose or project." In other words: objects marked by teleology—or, if you will, by design.

But renaming a property to take away its metaphysical sting should fool no one. Monod claimed that he could dissolve teleonomy—the unmistakable designedness of organisms—into chance and necessity. Well, he did not, and if design theorists are right, he could not. *Chance and Necessity* is one long dance around the problem, ending with Monod's leaping into the arms of "a unique occurrence": the causally inexplicable origin of life on earth, an event, Monod observed, whose "probability was virtually zero."

Chance abused in this way can "explain" anything. As a philosophical naturalist, Monod was of course being true to his principles. But let us not give this sort of reasoning the good name of science. It is a philosophy—one contender among many—and not much of a contender at that.

The great theme that unites the intelligent-design community is the falsity of naturalism as a philosophy of explanation. Chance and necessity do not exhaust the causes that we know. The task facing design theorists is to turn this intuition into knowledge, by showing that their theory provides understanding and discoveries not forthcoming within a strictly naturalistic framework.

Mr. Berlinski doubts that this is possible. Time will tell. Paley is dead; so is Darwin; so, too, is Monod. Let the dead bury the dead.

Discovery Institute
Seattle, Washington

LEONARD LEVIN:

David Berlinski's declaration of a stalemate between Darwinism and intelligent-design theory strikes me as premature. After so many innovative moves in the past decade, the players on both sides are warming to what may be a long and interest-

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ing match. My bets and sympathies are on the pro-design side.

I question Mr. Berlinski's argument that because improbability cannot be quantified, it cannot therefore be qualitatively asserted. Let me counter with an analogy. The improbability of a monkey typing a Shakespearean sonnet is quantifiable because the set of typewriter-strokes is finite. The improbability of the same monkey writing out a sonnet longhand is not precisely quantifiable, yet it is obviously more improbable than typing it. (The monkey can miss a "G" only 25 different ways when typing but an indeterminately large number of ways when writing by hand.) The typing case thus sets a lower limit to the longhand case. Similarly, the improbability of producing a specific gene within the set of DNA nucleotide permutations, though not defining the actual world of possibility, sets a finite lower limit to the improbability of the actual case of producing it within the indeterminate set of all matter configurations. It thus justifies our qualitative judgment that the latter is extremely improbable.

On the other hand, the molecular "scrabble" theorists have also ignored a crucial factor: determining the percent of syntactically correct formations within permutations of a given alphabet. What are the odds that a monkey will type not a specific sonnet but any syntactically correct string of 200 characters in English (or any language)? Not as small, but extremely small nonetheless. What are the odds (given the machinery of producing DNA) of randomly generating any syntactically correct string of nucleotides that will produce a viable protein? I have not seen this question addressed by either side. It should be amenable to analytical and experimental approaches and may move the debate forward.

Theologically, we must still distinguish between proving God's existence and presuming to describe the divine attributes. We may satisfy ourselves, rationally or subjectively, that life overcomes astronomical odds, yet the next step of inference is much harder. It is not chance—but what is it? Call it the anthropic principle, élan vital, quantum reduction, negentropy, or "design"—we have only the token outline of an answer, and the frontier of the eternal mystery. To know what "design" is may be to presume to see God's face.

Jewish Theological Seminary
New York City

MICHAEL SHERMAN:

As a professional biologist, I have always wondered why the Darwinian idea of evolution is so accepted among my colleagues. If one were to poll biologists, I would bet that almost all of them would say that there has been evolution and that it has taken place in accord with Darwin's theory. Probably 95 percent of them, however, have never thought seriously about evolution, and the rest are convinced of it because it is a clear, simple, materialistic idea.

On the other hand, reading the papers on evolution published in respected science journals like *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* or *Nature*, one is surprised at the weakness of the arguments. Indeed, the standards of proof in the field are much lower than in the rest of biology. Such papers would never make it through the peer-review process if they concerned molecular or cellular biology. Of course, there are obvious reasons for such low standards, including the difficulty of testing evolutionary hypotheses through experimentation. But if the theory is based on poor arguments, why have criticisms of it not succeeded in convincing mainstream scientists?

I see a number of reasons. The first is that in arguments against Darwinism, people usually assume that the alternative is creationism—that is, the creation of nature by God without an element of evolution. This idea cannot be accepted by scientists because (a) it is not interesting from a scientific point of view (it does not point to further scientific research) and, more importantly, (b) there is an overwhelming body of arguments from many fields in favor of evolution.

From this follows the second main problem: that despite the large number of flaws in Darwinism, there is no scientifically sound alternative hypothesis. Criticisms of Darwinism will not convince professional biologists until the critics can describe a strong alternative mechanism of evolution that can be tested experimentally.

A third problem is that authors of publications against Darwinism mainly base their arguments on formal logic, e.g., the idea that complex systems cannot evolve in multiple minor steps. Such arguments may convince physicists or mathematicians, but they do not sway experimental biologists. From their experience dealing with enormously complicated biological systems, biologists know that hypotheses based purely on formal logic never work (especially if they involve some mathematics).

Finally, there is the problem of where criticisms of Darwinian theory are made. To convince the scientific community of something, one should not publish books; one should publish in peer-reviewed scientific journals of high profile.

To conclude on a positive note: I do believe that we can draw experimentally testable predictions from the theory of intelligent design. I say this based on three groups of recent findings: (1) paleontological data showing that all major groups of multicellular animals appeared almost simultaneously, indicating a lack of gradual evolution of large groups; (2) the very high homology of regulatory proteins that control development of systems with similar functions that evolved independently (e.g., the mammalian eye and the eye of a fly); (3) the fact that the

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number of genes in the human genome is not very different from that of worms or flies.

I would suggest that since complex systems cannot, in fact, evolve by random changes, there *was* a design. When outlining multicellular animals, the designer would have introduced into the genomes of primitive species the information about complex organ systems required for future organisms. These complex organ systems are silent in the primitive organisms but can be activated, giving rise to new, more complicated organisms through the process of evolution.

This idea does not reject the possibility that these newly developed organisms were fine-tuned through random mutation and natural selection, but it does assume that the major complex organ systems were predesigned. With our present understanding of molecular biology, it should not be too difficult or expensive to test this idea by finding information about complex organ systems in the genomes of primitive multicellular organisms and trying to find ways to activate these systems.

School of Medicine
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

DAVID E. SAFIR:

I enjoyed David Berlinski's thoughtful and erudite article about intelligent design. As a scientist, I had found Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* a refreshing critique of Darwin. It always troubled me that much of evolutionary theory seemed to be built on faith alone, with enormous leaps required to accept its view of how life formed and changed.

What strikes me after 56 years as a biologist is how improbable it is that life occurred randomly—improbable but not impossible. We are still left to make a "faith" choice. To me, it seems most likely that some sort of high intelligence designed life as we know it.

Los Gatos, California

DOUGLAS PORTER:

David Berlinski's otherwise excellent article is flawed by his example of a three-legged stool as an attempt to refute Michael Behe's argument that irreducibly complex systems cannot arise by small, random steps. On this point, it is Mr. Berlinski's logic that falls apart.

In the first place, Behe's argument pertains to *systems* requiring complex processes to work, the failure of any one of which dooms the system. A three-legged stool, however, is not a system but a static structure. Moreover, removing one leg from a three-legged stool only causes it to fail because of gravity, a force outside the "system" and therefore irrelevant to the argument. Finally, it may be true, as Mr. Berlinski argues, that a three-legged stool can be constructed by "numerous, successive, slight modifications" of a cylindrical block of wood, but such modifications can hardly be random or Darwinian in nature. They require a designer. Mr. Berlinski merely demonstrates one way in which a three-legged stool can be *designed*—an argument very much in support of Behe's position.

The refusal of biologists to come to terms with the colossal improbabilities of evolution is the reason that Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* has attracted so much attention.

Albuquerque, New Mexico

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ:

David Berlinski writes that "Darwin's theory of evolution and theories of intelligent design are in conceptual conflict. Although they may both be false, they cannot both be true." Not so. To an intelligent designer, evolution would be a brilliant invention, a way of forever expanding and refining creation.

College of Staten Island
Staten Island, New York

REV. EDWARD T. OAKES:

According to a story that is perhaps *bien trouvé*, Alfred North Whitehead was once asked why he did not write more clearly, to which he is supposed to have replied: "Because I don't think more clearly." Based on the evidence of his various articles in COMMENTARY, if David Berlinski were ever to be asked why he writes so clearly, he could well reply: "Because I think clearly."

Clear thinking is especially evident in his latest essay, where he dissects the flaws in the arguments of those who claim that both the universe and biological systems have been intelligently designed (by God presumably, although some authors are annoyingly coy about saying so). True, Mr. Berlinski admits that members of the intelligent-design movement have highlighted genuine dilemmas in Darwinian theory. But more importantly, he has exposed how their own positive proposals cannot really provide an adequate explanation for the inexplicable mystery of life—or the existence of the universe. Complexity, even irreducible complexity, is not the same thing as a consciously intended effect.

I would only add that complexity, whether specified or not, cannot emerge at all except from a prior background of order, and that fact constitutes the real theological point that seems to animate the intelligent-design movement. The implicit (and sometimes explicit) theological agenda of this brigade leads Mr. Berlinski to his final thoughts on theism and natural theology, and here too I think I am largely in agreement with his reflections. The same issue that piqued the curiosity of Albert Einstein—whether the good Lord had any choice in creating the world or not—can be expressed in terms that dominated the debate among theist philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages.

By the time of Thomas Aquinas it was assumed by all Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers that Aristotle was right in defining God as Pure Act. But if that is the case,

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then how can it be possible for God to create a *possible* world, since possibility is excluded in God? Either God has a choice in creating the world or He doesn't. But if He *can* create, then possibility is embedded in Pure Act, a contradiction. This dilemma remained unsettled down to the days of Gottfried Leibniz; his way of resolving the tension was to admit a range of possibilities facing the deity, who would then be constrained by his reality as Pure Act to choose the *best* of all possible worlds.

The disaster to theodicy that this hypothesis led to is well known and gave Voltaire his great opening to attack the notion of divine providence. My own point is that Leibniz's dilemma still lives on in precisely the antinomies pointed out by Mr. Berlinski. The only "solution" to that dilemma, really, is a line from Aquinas right after he concludes his famous five proofs for the existence of God: "As Augustine says, since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil. This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good."

Needless to say, such an assertion cannot be grounded in science, since it requires for its verification a view of the final outcome of the universe's career, a view not given to the finite human mind. Only faith avails here. To bring in science as a kind of almost literal *deus ex machina* only gums up the issue, for both theology and science.

University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois

YAFFA GANZ:

David Berlinski sums up his long article by writing, "God alone knows what God is thinking. . . . We are in the position of observers contemplating a vast, cosmic lottery." Not quite. What we contemplate is a vast, mind-boggling, perfectly orchestrated universe. Although God chose which "necessities" would govern this universe and we are not privy to His secrets, He Himself is not governed by the reality He has created. If ever He chose to do so, He is perfectly capable of changing the rules of the game.

But what difference does it make? Why are so many serious scientists determined to prove—refute—God's copyright of creation? As Mr. Berlinski himself writes, "Could a designer whose nature we cannot fathom, using principles we cannot specify, construct a system we cannot characterize? If the question is unyielding, so too is its answer: who knows?"

But this does not mean, as Mr. Berlinski states, that "chance now returns as the default hypothesis, if only because it is the only hypothesis that is completely consistent with our ignorance." After all, if we are so ignorant, how do we know that chance is a more likely source of creation than God? Our ignorance is not the problem; it is our absolute incapacity to confront God. Trying to analyze God's "mind" through human logic and science is doomed to failure: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Speak—if you have wisdom!" (Job 38: 2-4). We can neither fathom nor confront nor comprehend God. We can only view His world, attempt to describe the mechanics that make it run, and serve Him in humility.

I would suggest breaking our scientific heads over more seemingly mundane, but more profitable, matters that explain and affect the world we live in. We should leave what Mr. Berlinski calls the "ineffable inimitable" (and I would call the Ineffable Inimitable) to theology.

Jerusalem, Israel

David Berlinski

On reading "Has Darwin Met His Match?," a number of my correspondents seem to have concluded that, like Saul on the road to Damascus, I have seen the light and changed my mind. A conversion to Darwinian orthodoxy is said to be imminent. These impressions I must correct at once. I have *never* expressed support for theories of intelligent design, much less for creationism, and my essay, far from representing a change of mind—no bad thing, in any case—does nothing more than amplify objections I have long held and often voiced.

Six and a half years ago, in responding to critics of "The Deniable Darwin" (COMMENTARY, June 1996), I made the point explicitly. "Some readers seem to be persuaded," I wrote in the September 1996 issue, "that in criticizing the Darwinian theory of evolution, I intended to uphold a doctrine of creationism. This is a mistake, supported by nothing that I have written." A few years later (September 2001), responding to critics of "What Brings a World into Being?" (COMMENTARY, April 2001), I was even more forthright: "If I thought that intelligent design, or any artful contrivance like it, explained anything in any depth, I would leap to the cannon's mouth and say so. I do not and I did not."

For the record: I do not believe that theories of intelligent design explain those features of living systems that Darwin's theory of evolution fails to explain. And vice-versa. I wrote "The Deniable Darwin" and "Has Darwin Met His Match?" to say why.

IN "HAS DARWIN MET HIS MATCH?," I suggested that theories of intelligent design and Darwin's theory of evolution shared a strong family resemblance—the same guppy eyes, the same small ears, the same potato nose. PAUL R. GROSS will have none of it. Intelligent design is wrong and

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I am right to affirm the fact, but Darwin's theory is right and I am wrong to deny it.

Mr. Gross's animadversions begin with a reminder. It is only those "who do not know much evolutionary biology" who refer to something called "Darwinism." The professionals know better. I quite understand Mr. Gross's concern. The term "Darwinism" conveys the suggestion of a secular ideology, a global system of belief. So it does and so it surely is. Darwin's theory has been variously used—by Darwinian biologists—to explain the development of a bipedal gait, the tendency to laugh when amused, obesity, *anorexia nervosa*, business negotiations, a preference for tropical landscapes, the evolutionary roots of political rhetoric, maternal love, infanticide, clan formation, marriage, divorce, certain comical sounds, funeral rites, the formation of regular verb forms, altruism, homosexuality, feminism, greed, romantic love, jealousy, warfare, monogamy, polygamy, adultery, the fact that men are pigs, recursion, sexual display, abstract art, and religious beliefs of every description. If Darwinian biologists have not yet appropriated the class struggle, this is only because of their respect for competing ideological prerogatives.

I am also hardly the only one to use the term "Darwinism" and so convey the suggestion of an ideological agenda. Adding his mite to D.S. Bendall's collection, *Evolution from Molecules to Men* (1983), Richard Dawkins entitled his essay "Universal Darwinism." Dawkins liked the word well enough to use it again in "Darwin and Darwinism," the title of his contribution to Microsoft's *Encarta Encyclopedia*. Then there is the series of short books appearing under the title *Darwinism Today* and published by Yale University Press. The first book in the series is by the eminent Darwinian biologist John Maynard Smith.

With regard to his other claims, Mr. Gross rather resembles a standard fixture of the schoolyard brawl: the boy who refuses actually to fight but instead adverts to the remarkable pugilistic powers of his older brother. My criticism of Darwin's theory? "Creationist pablum," Mr. Gross declares with a snort. A mighty host is prepared to enforce the point: tens of thousand of papers, dozens of books, scores of websites, courses in all the better colleges. Specialists are on call. In resting his case on what others are said to have said, Mr. Gross has issued a challenge that it is not possible rationally to meet. Let us by all means have the details—my claims, those refutations—and *then* you and I can fight.

In still other respects, Mr. Gross is concerned to show that his vigor in combating the evils of intelligent design exceeds my own. The men whom I criticize, he complains, have not published their work in peer-reviewed journals. Quite true. They have not. But anyone who understands how science works institutionally will find this unsurprising. "Being right," as one shrewd critic has observed, "isn't enough. What you say, however right, must be said in a currently acceptable language, must not violate too brutally currently acceptable taste, and must somehow signify your membership in a respectable club." That shrewd critic was Paul Gross himself, writing in a 1998 publication of the Marine Biological Laboratory. Allow me to introduce one Gross to the other.

As Mark Perakh observes, I have indeed endorsed books by both Michael Behe and William Dembski. I would do so again. Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* and Dembski's *The Design Inference* challenge received opinion; they are carefully argued; and they address important issues. I agree with some of the claims made in both books, but not with all of the claims made in either. A man may admire a book without endorsing it completely. Had Darwin's publishers in 1859 asked for a blurb, I would gladly have said that *The Origin of Species* is both quirky and provocative. Sales might well have improved. I would do as much now for Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker*, a book whose thesis I reject but whose title I admire.

Jason Rosenhouse assumes that I harbor an ongoing animus against "mainstream biology." Not so. Molecular biology, one of the glories of modern science, is where the mainstream lies; evolutionary biology remains what it has always been, a distant and rather muddy tributary. It is not molecular biology with which I scruple, needless to say, but Darwin's theory of evolution.

In my most recent essay—the one under discussion, I might remind Mr. Rosenhouse—I introduced Darwin only to suggest that both his theory and theories of intelligent design often lapse at the same points: the fossil record, for example. Mr. Rosenhouse denies this because he denies that Darwin's theory lapses at all. "Blubbering about gaps in the fossil record," he writes, his snort echoing Mr. Gross's, "cannot change the fact that, with millions of fossils collected and classified, not one is out of place from a Darwinian standpoint."

But what is at issue for Darwin's theory is not the fossils that exist but the ones that do not. The Cambrian explosion is mysterious precisely because the phyla that emerge during the Cambrian era have no obvious physical antecedents. By the same token, what is at issue for theories of design is not the fossils that do not exist but the ones that do. The reptile-to-mammal sequence is confounding to intelligent-design theorists precisely because the organisms, slotted head to tail, seem to form an unbroken Darwinian sequence. The fossil record is a puzzle for both views—a point urged on me, I should add, by Phillip Johnson.

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Counterexamples are in any case open to challenge. In an essay entitled "Phylogenetic Hypotheses of the Relationship of Arthropods to Precambrian and Cambrian Problematic Taxa" (*Systematic Biology* 45, pp. 190-222), B.M. Waggoner argues that at least some Edicaran fossils fit into known phylogenetic groups and are thus ancestral to lower Cambrian metazoans: frond-like fossils died dreaming of hitting the big time as cnidarians, he suggests, and other members of the Edicara may have had ambitious plans to become annelids and arthropods. L. W. Buss and A. Seilacher, in "The Phylum Vendobionta: A Sister Group of the Eumetzoa?" (*Paleobiology* 20, pp. 1-4), have held the reverse, proposing gloomily that Edicaran fossils represent life forms that went nowhere because they had nowhere to go.

These are paleontological debates, of which the literature is by now considerable. The case against the Cambrian explosion has also been made from a theoretical perspective. Evidence from molecular clocks, Daniel Y.-C Wang, Sudhir Kumar, and S. Blair Hedges have argued in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* (Series B, January 22, 1999), suggests that a great many organisms from at least three phyla must have been present on earth *before* the Cambrian era. Indeed, Hedges, the paper's principal author, is persuaded that the emergence of so many phyla during the Cambrian era is no longer a mystery—though in reaching this conclusion he has replaced one mystery by another, since the organisms whose existence he champions on theoretical grounds remain undiscovered. "Why don't we see any fossils of these species long before the Cambrian era?," Hedges asks, thus returning the discussion to the point at issue.

On the other hand, the reptile-to-mammal sequence, the jewel in the crown of Darwinian paleontology, is not without critics of its own in the intelligent-design camp. The indefatigable Phillip Johnson has drawn my attention to a paper by John Woodmorappe in *TJ* 15(1), 2001, pp. 44-52. (*TJ* is self-described as a "creation journal," a fact of no relevance to an assessment of Woodmorappe's arguments.) Using cladistic analysis, Woodmorappe investigated a discrete group of morphological characteristics that paleontologists have offered as evidence for the evolutionary nature of the reptile-to-mammal sequence. At issue is the claim that mammal-like reptiles, when arranged in succession from the pelycosaurs on up, "show an essentially unbroken chain of progressively more mammal-like fossils." With respect to 165 of the 181 anatomical characteristics cited in C.A. Sidor and J.A. Hopson's "Ghost Lineages and 'Mammalness': Assessing the Temporal Pattern of Character Acquisition in the Synapsida" (*Paleontology*, 24 (2), 1998, Appendix 2, pp. 269-270), Woodmorappe argues that "the majority . . . do *not* show a unidirectional progression toward the mammalian condition" (emphasis added).

I have not studied Woodmorappe's paper thoroughly, but I am quite sure that both his conclusions and the methodology upon which they rest will be widely disputed, if they are ever widely noted. I return to my own starting point: neither Darwinians nor design theorists can look to the fossil record with perfect equanimity.

"Darwinism," Mr. Rosenhouse writes, apparently unaware of Paul Gross's terminological strictures, "requires continuity at the level of the genotype, not the phenotype." I am not sure what this might mean, but I am willing to guess: small changes in the genotype may well give rise to large changes in the phenotype. I suspect that Mr. Rosenhouse is correct; I have argued the point myself, including in my response to Arthur Shapiro in the correspondence on "The Deniable Darwin."

A fascinating paper in the January 10, 2003 issue of *Cell* deals with this topic. In "Molecular Rheostats Control Expression of Genes Cell," Richard Freiman and Robert Tijian observe that the machinery of genetic regulation—which gene goes on, which goes off—constitutes a magnificently subtle and exquisitely complicated system, and one by no means completely understood. The small differences between a human being and an earthworm, they suggest, may owe as much to parametric changes in their respective regulatory systems as to the absolute difference in the number of their genes, which in any case is not very great.

What a remarkable shift in view this paper represents! The gene has been demoted: it is still the raw stuff of life—what else is there?—but not the source of life's variety. The picture now emerging suggests that the genome is like a billboard made up of thousands of lights. When the cell's rheostats are in one position, the billboard spells earthworm; when in another position, human being. How these regulatory systems themselves may have evolved, the authors do not say, largely because they do not know; indeed, since many of the structural elements in the systems have been conserved across long periods of evolutionary time, they do not know *whether* the systems have really evolved at all.

In concluding his defense of Darwin's theory, Mr. Rosenhouse appeals to thousands of satisfied researchers, rather as if he were framing advertising copy for arch supports. "Numerous complex systems have been studied," he writes, "and the major steps of their evolution revealed." I would ask Mr. Rosenhouse to supply a single example of a complex biochemical system whose major evolutionary steps have been revealed and then explained by Darwin's theory. A good place to start would be with the systems discussed by Michael Behe in *Darwin's Black Box*.

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What Behe and I both require in this regard is quite simple: a detailed, step-by-step biochemical account demonstrating a plausible Darwinian pathway for the emergence of *any* irreducibly complex system. Plausible—meaning, no appeals to unlikely events; and Darwinian—meaning, incremental improvement at each step. Before Mr. Rosenhouse proposes to pester me during office hours, a copy of Kenneth Miller's *Finding Darwin's God* in hand, I would suggest he consult Behe's own expert demolition of Miller's proposals. References are available online at the Discovery Institute's website: www.Discovery.org.

CLAY SHIRKY is quite right to observe that physicists do not practice Einsteinism; but as I have already noted, Darwinists do refer constantly to Darwinism. "Like Freud and Marx," A.S. Byatt remarked recently, "Darwin has suffered from becoming a belief system, when he was simply a very original thinker." Mr. Shirky might ask himself why this is so.

I do not believe that Darwinism is a fixed philosophical system. Like some primordial jelly, the thing is both squishy and constantly in motion. Terms, claims, and stories multiply unceasingly.

An example: some organisms lose certain functional properties over time. There are wingless insects, flightless birds, blind moles. Evolutionary biologists have long maintained that what is lost is destined to stay lost: it has been an article of their faith. And one that has apparently been misplaced. In a recent research report entitled "Loss and Recovery of Wings in Stick Insects," Michael F. Whiting, Sven Bradler, and Taylor Maxwell demonstrate that stick insects of the order Phasmatodea, having lost their wings over evolutionary time, nonetheless retain the capacity to reacquire them later (*Nature* 421, January 16, 2003, pp. 264-267). "These results," they write, "suggest that wing-development pathways are conserved in wingless phasmids, and that 're-evolution' of wings has had an unrecognized role in insect diversification." Will evolutionary biologists be forced as a result to reassess evolutionary theory, concluding perhaps that a theory that has failed to account for the facts is in need of revision or, perhaps, rejection? What a thought. Within a few years, "Loss and Recovery of Wings in Stick Insects" will be counted a Darwinian triumph, as the theory successfully manages once again to adapt to alien circumstances.

At the time I wrote "The Deniable Darwin" in 1996, biologists were still concerned to keep their disputes from the public eye. Their reticence has given way. They are now inclined to exhibit their battle scars like stigmata; the late Stephen Jay Gould was a virtuoso of the form, his mournful recriminations filling entire issues of the *New York Review of Books*. Although Mr. Shirky is persuaded that the factional debates within Darwinian biology are a sign of glowing good health, another view is possible. These debates represent the conceptual confusions of a discipline that has simply not achieved sufficient clarity to count as a serious science.

I failed to discuss the work of R.A. Fisher or William Hamilton in my essay for the same reason that I did not discuss late Sung poetry: neither their work nor that of the late Sung poets has anything pertinent to say about theories of intelligent design.

The concluding paragraphs of Mr. Shirky's letter prompt me to wonder whose essay he has been reading. Why on earth should he imagine that I desire a world in which science stops trying to explain things? I am in favor of *scientific* explanations wherever they may lead.

NO LESS perplexing is that S.L. BACCUS should believe that I—of all people—have written a brief for the existence of the Christian God, and that my ultimate aim "appears to be getting Christian beliefs taught in our schools." I urge Mr. Baccus to consider my name, my devotion to Zion, and my dark Semitic good looks. Phillip Johnson's opinions—the ones that Mr. Baccus quotes—are interesting, but they have nothing directly to do with what I have written.

UNDER THE mistaken impression that my essay was a critique of Darwin's theory of evolution—perhaps he has confused it with "The Deniable Darwin"—MORTON ROSOFF is eager to establish my ignorance. Under the no less mistaken impression that I have endorsed intelligent design, he next offers his own criticism of the movement: "no empirical evidence, no models, no verifiable predictions, no possibility of correction or elaboration . . . , not intended to improve our knowledge or extend scientific horizons." When he catches his breath, Mr. Rosoff might wish to consult the essay I actually wrote for a few additional suggestions. I did not discuss the anthropic principle, but as for the other methodological tools he lists, I am all for them.

THE ISSUES that MATT YOUNG raises with respect to Nilsson and Pelger's evolutionary model of the development of the mammalian eye are of greater moment than they may appear to the casual reader. They require a detailed response, one that cannot be fitted into even a lengthy exchange of letters. Here I might just note in passing that while Mr. Young has obviously looked at the footnote in which I accuse him of reading carelessly, he seems to have read carelessly the essay to which it is attached: how else to explain his reference to me and my "neo-creationist colleagues"?

"NATURALISTS," TONY DOYLE writes, "contend that for any event or phenomenon that needs explaining,

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we should seek only physical causes." This is indeed the claim often made, and I assume that Mr. Doyle endorses it. But naturalism, broadly conceived, is neither a premise to any of the great physical theories nor one of their conclusions. Its role in contemporary discourse is, as Phillip Johnson argued, wholly extra-scientific.

Mr. Doyle's defense of naturalistic doctrine is thus philosophical and historical. That is fine by me; I am in favor of what the *New York Times* calls the living arts. Still, I believe his philosophical views are incorrect and his historical analysis wrong. Mr. Doyle may have "a robust idea of physical causation," but David Hume, and the great Arabic theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali before him, argued forcefully that, when analyzed, causation dwindles into temporal succession and constant conjunction: one thing following another. I urge Mr. Doyle to reread al-Ghazzali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* or Hume's *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. The inner connection that attaches a cause to its effect remains beyond our grasp, part of the mystery of nature. When Mr. Doyle writes that "we do not have a clue about how the *theist's* nonphysical causation is supposed to work" (emphasis added), he is simply specifying a general lack of understanding. We are pretty much clueless across the board.

By the same token, it seems to me profoundly incorrect to say that in mathematical physics it is the "search for physical causes and only physical causes [that] has paid off." When Isaac Newton introduced the universal force of gravitation in the *Principia*, he was appealing to a power in nature that acted both instantaneously and at a distance. The connection between any "robust idea of physical causation" and the assumptions needed to explain gravity was thus broken from the very first. Mathematical physics has proceeded inexorably in the direction that Newton indicated. String theorists now explain the charges carried by D-branes in terms of algebraic K-theory. Every *direct* connection to a world of physical experience or causation has been lost. So too, for the moment, has every *indirect* connection, since string theory is not yet amenable to experimental tests of any sort.

I agree that Shakespeare was "physical from head to toe." So is a cat, and as every cat owner knows, there is absolutely no saying what a cat is going to do next. The laws of physics are both unavailing and irrelevant.

AS CHRIS BEALL notes, the design inference, inasmuch as it goes beyond the *existence* of a designer to conclusions about his nature, very often topples over into incoherence. I agree. Very often it does.

IT IS good to be reminded by the distinguished biologist GEORGE C. WILLIAMS that complex structures that are optimal in one dimension may well be sub-optimal in another. As well as we may be able to see, we cannot see what is going on behind our backs, not to mention what is often beneath our noses. I am not sure what follows.

May I also observe that no one with two ex-wives could possibly be unaware of the deity's less attractive features?

CONTRARY TO what KARL WESSEL writes, I did not provide a "critique" of philosophical naturalism in my essay. I mentioned it in passing, and paused only to agree with Phillip Johnson that as a principle it is wholly extra-scientific.

In commenting on my discussion of Michael Behe's work, Mr. Wessel suggests that I have failed to read the scientific literature, and in particular the work of A.-L. Barabási. Indeed? In a paper entitled "Hierarchical Organization of Modularity in Metabolic Networks" (*Science*, Vol. 297, August 30, 2002), Barabási and his colleagues argue that "spatially or chemically isolated functional modules composed of several cellular components and carrying discrete functions" should be considered "fundamental building blocks of cellular organization."

The result is a model of the cell resembling one of those horrible Swedish factories in which workers sit glumly at red and white Ikea desks and are isolated by glass partitions. But Barabási *et al.* also recognize that the "thousands of components of a living cell are dynamically interconnected," the Swedish factory now giving way to a second model, one resembling an equally horrible discotheque, rather like the old Studio 54, in which everyone is simultaneously involved with everyone else, frequently in ways no one wishes to know. Reconciling the Swedish factory to the discotheque is the burden of their paper.

This is modestly interesting stuff, if hardly calculated to induce an ardent desire to see a sequel. But its relevance to Mr. Wessel's concern is somewhat limited. In the first place, Barabási *et al.* do not often tie their work to biochemistry, and when they do, the results are inconclusive. "[I]t is . . . apparent," they write, "that putative module-boundaries do not always overlap with intuitive 'biochemistry-based boundaries.'" This prompts Barabási to the conclusion favored by every researcher facing a gap between his theories and the facts: "further experimental and theoretical analysis will be needed." No doubt.

In the second place, Barabási *et al.* are perfectly aware of a point that has escaped Mr. Wessel, namely, that their work does nothing to settle any issue that Michael Behe may have raised. "Understanding the evolutionary mechanism that explains the simultaneous emergence of the observed hierarchical and scale-free topology of the metabolism, as well as its generality [*sic*] to cellular organization, is now a prime challenge." A *prime chal-*

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lenge—meaning a challenge that has not been met.

I thank Alexander Eterman for his thoughtful letter, with which I agree. Intelligent design *is* doomed to disappear as a movement if it can do no more than criticize Darwin's theory of evolution. Still, the purely negative criticisms made by members of the intelligent-design community have often been considerable in their effect—certainly more so than any criticisms I may have made. As a result, Darwin's theory has lost some of its intellectual respectability even as it has continued to extend its popular reach.

A great many scholars are now willing to say in public what they have long believed in private: that random variation and natural selection do not suffice to explain the observed facts in biology. An advertisement to this effect, placed by the Discovery Institute in the *New York Review of Books*,* was signed by one hundred academics: under the letter "S" alone, the list stretched from Henry F. Schaefer, the director of the center for computational quantum chemistry at the University of Georgia, to Richard Sternberg of the department of invertebrate zoology at the Smithsonian Institution. *Geshmak*, as we right-wing Christian fundamentalists say.

Some physicists may well entertain the idea that "our universe is one of an infinite number of universes," as Geoffrey Kent writes—striking evidence that during hard times, some physicists will entertain anything and welcome anyone. But surely scientists who are happy to urge Occam's razor against design theory should hesitate before heedlessly multiplying universes themselves, the more so since the existence of the damn things is often invoked precisely to avoid the inference to design in the first place.

I am not sure what Mr. Kent means by asserting that chance "cannot exist in infinity." A random variable can certainly have a continuous distribution—but that may not be what he has in mind.

As Jonathan Wells writes in his admirably clear letter, the gravamen of the intelligent-design movement is the inference to design, an inference that carries us from the observed properties of biological systems to the existence of a designer. The identification of the designer with the Christian deity requires a separate inference, one that design theorists need not make. I accept the point. In my essay, I tried to suggest as much, at least implicitly, by incorporating Fred Hoyle's supercalculating intellect into the class of possible designers. Hoyle was a life-long atheist, and in reading him I find no reason to believe that in fundamental matters he ever changed his mind.

Still, I admit to a tickle of discontent at Mr. Wells's attempt to dissociate the designer's existence from the designer's identity. It may be helpful to put the matter in deductive form. If there is design in nature, then there is a designer: that is Mr. Wells's leading premise. A second premise follows, embodying a factual claim: there is design in nature. The conclusion that there *is* a designer follows as a matter of logic.

But, articulated in this way, the conclusion seems suspiciously trivial. If the designer's nature is not known, then in what sense does his existence tell us anything that is not expressed in the second premise? To be sure, the twin propositions that there is design in nature and that there is a designer do not say *quite* the same thing; but, like certain houses in Paris, they have a tendency to collapse toward one another. Which designer? The one handling the design. Which design? The one handled by the designer. In the end, we are left with the fact that certain properties of living systems have not been explained. On this point Mr. Wells and I agree completely.

In characterizing his own work, Michael J. Behe is entirely too unassuming. By demonstrating that irreducibly complex systems cannot arise along one Darwinian path—the assembly-line model of construction—he has indeed provided a logical argument against Darwin's theory. This is an important achievement. My point was only that his argument has not been generalized to include *all* Darwinian paths. This is a modest criticism.

As long as I find myself explaining Mr. Behe's achievements to Mr. Behe, let me go a bit further. It seems to me that *Darwin's Black Box* is destined to play the same role in evolutionary thought that Karl Lashley's "The Serial Order of Behavior" played in behavioral psychology over fifty years ago (cf. L.A. Jefress, editor, *Cerebral Mechanisms in Behavior*, 1951). Although a behaviorist by training—and a student of John Watson, the founder of the field—Lashley came to understand that a certain class of familiar psychological acts involve a complicated serial order. In formulating a sentence, we typically see to the end of the sentence before venturing on its beginning, adjusting our stream of speech accordingly to account for grammatical relations of subordination and deferred placement. Serial order, Lashley realized, could not be explained by any system of associative "chaining" in which each act in a behavioral repertoire is explained by an act that has already taken place.

Psychologists were slow to appreciate the force of Lashley's critique. But when Noam Chomsky, writing ten years later, pointed to certain features of natural language that were inaccessible to finite-state mechanisms or even Markov processes, he was sharpening and extending Lashley's insight. There-

* The text reads: "We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged."

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after, a shrewd insight became a movement in thought: the so-called cognitive revolution.

It is curious that so few biologists appreciate the formal similarities between Darwin's theory of evolution and behavioral theories in psychology. But the same basic idea is at work, with "reinforcement" in psychology called "natural selection" in biology. And here is an odd point. Although behaviorism is widely thought to have been stabbed through the heart, most especially by Chomsky's criticism of B.F. Skinner, the fact of the matter is that in the end, Skinner has proved more durable than anyone might have guessed, and with batwings flapping has burst buoyantly from his crypt.

We know that behavioral psychology provides an explanation for a limited class of experimental results; beyond those results, it fails. What an individual does in acquiring a natural language cannot be explained in terms of any schedule of reinforcement. Indeed, it cannot be explained in terms of the environment at all; reference must be made to the individual's innate endowment. But linguists who came early to scoff at Skinner—Chomsky now included—are involved in making Skinner's argument on the level of the species. For what are random variation and natural selection but a form of behavioral *biology*?

The intellectual history of the past half-century is not without its ironical aspects.

IN HIS graceful letter, WILLIAM A. DEMBSKI argues that in some respects I have misunderstood his views, and in other respects I have insufficiently appreciated their force. It is certainly possible; the issues that Mr. Dembski raises are subtle, and his letter and my response should both be regarded as efforts to get things a little clearer.

Under what conditions may we rationally eliminate chance as the explanation for certain events? This is Mr. Dembski's question. Two things, he argues, are necessary: small probabilities and reasonably tight specifications. When these criteria are met, we are entitled to strike off chance; if the event in question is also not explicable by natural laws, design emerges as the only plausible alternative.

In developing his argument, Mr. Dembski has a certain model in mind. The design comes first, expressed perhaps as a blueprint, agenda, schedule, or even a system of thought. Next comes the designed event or object. "How a designer," he writes in *No Free Lunch*, "gets from a thought to a thing is, at least in broad strokes, straightforward: (1) A designer conceives a purpose. (2) To accomplish that purpose, the designer forms a plan. (3) To execute that plan, the designer specifies the building materials and assembly instructions. (4) Finally, the designer or some surrogate applies the assembly instructions to the building materials. What emerges is a designed object, and the designer is successful to the degree that the object fulfills the designer's purposes."

This is *executive* design, to coin a phrase and mark a distinction. In my essay, I suggested that there is a range of states, acts, or processes that are clearly intentional—they are brought about by intelligent agency—and yet share none of the features of executive design. The design of a painting is very often revealed *in* its execution and not before. Design in this sense might well be called *immanent*. The painter Francis Bacon often stressed just this point in commenting on his own work (see *Francis Bacon*, 1975), and the distinction between executive and immanent design appears as well in Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, a book that design theorists might study with profit. With respect to immanent design, there are no prior purposes, no plans, and no application of assembly instructions to building materials. For this class of artifacts, probabilities are not relevant and specifications are inapplicable.

I am well aware of Mr. Dembski's distinction between a specification and a fabrication, the more so since I discussed the distinction at length in my book *Black Mischief: Language, Life, Logic & Luck* (1986), where Mr. Dembski's "fabrications" appear as "retroactive specifications." But this distinction has nothing to do with the distinction between executive and immanent design. Both specifications and fabrications apply, and apply only, to events capable of possessing an executive design. Velasquez's painting of the royal court, which I cited in my COMMENTARY essay, lacks both a specification *and* a fabrication. A painting is not like a point in archery. It cannot be specified before it exists, and specifying it after it exists is useless, voiding the intended contrast between a specification and a fabrication.

Although both Mr. Dembski and I agree that specified improbabilities are not necessary to trigger a design inference, we do so for different reasons. On the question of whether they are sufficient, we part company altogether. In "Has Darwin Met His Match?" I argued that specifications are not necessary to trigger a sense that an unlikely event has occurred, and that if specified improbabilities are not necessary, they are also not sufficient to trigger an inference to design, since plainly improbability *by itself* tells us nothing about design.

The issue, then, turns on a tight circle. My argument for the irrelevance of Mr. Dembski's specifications begins with the obvious. A specification is a human gesture, a bit of descriptive apparatus. It does not change a system of probabilities, and so it has nothing to do with expectations based on those probabilities. Highly improbable specified events happen precisely as many times as one would expect, given their probabilities, but so, for that matter, do highly improbable *un*specified events.

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It is this last claim that Mr. Dembski would deny. His counterexample is a fair coin flipped 1,000 times. The particular sequence of heads and tails that results has the probability of roughly one in ten to the 300th power. "How often should [I] have expected this sequence to occur?" Mr. Dembski asks. Not at all, he responds cheerfully. But the sequence *has* occurred, and the relevant record of heads and tails is there in plain sight. This persuades Mr. Dembski that, if left unspecified, unlikely events tend to occur more often than any assignment of probabilities would suggest.

I understand Mr. Dembski's reasoning, but I reject it as unwholesome. He is stuck, after all, with an expectation—a particular sequence should not occur at all—that is in plain contradiction to the facts—a particular sequence has indeed occurred. This is not necessarily a fatal flaw, but it does suggest that something has to give. What has to give is the nice coincidence between what the theory of probability affirms and what the facts reveal. Here Mr. Dembski's intuitions seem to be making certain clanging noises while emitting a good deal of smoke.

My own intuitions, by contrast, are smoke-free and purr like a charm. Is the sequence that has just been revealed highly improbable? It is. How often should it have occurred? Precisely as many times as one might expect, given its probability. In a sequence of identical and independent experiments, *this* particular outcome would not be realized again until the heat death of the universe or the rehabilitation of Senator Trent Lott, whichever comes first. The fact that the sequence has already occurred is of no significance. Nothing in the theory of probability prevents an extremely unlikely event from being realized in the very first experiment, just as nothing in the same theory prevents a man from winning the lottery after purchasing his very first ticket. I see no reason to be swayed from my conclusion that unlikely events happen as many times as one might expect, given their probability.

With the distinction between specified and unspecified improbabilities wiped out, the inference to design sputters. Improbabilities are not by themselves sufficient to trigger that inference, and, *a fortiori*, neither are specified improbabilities.

PAUL A. NELSON reminds me that, in *Chance and Necessity*, Jacques Monod *began* by acknowledging the fact that living creatures are driven by a sense of their purpose in life, and *then* persuaded himself that this obvious property was not so obvious after all. What seems to be their design, Monod concluded, is an illusion, or an artifact; there is necessity, and there is chance, and there is nothing more. Richard Dawkins has made almost the same argument in *The Blind Watchmaker*, and Mr. Nelson is right to remark that there is in all this something nutty. Monod's efforts to explain away the obvious did not succeed.

Of course, there is a distinction between saying that Monod did not succeed and saying that he *could* not have succeeded. Drawing that distinction, Mr. Nelson places his hopes for the latter possibility on the prospects for intelligent design. But to the extent that design theorists have overestimated their own arguments, to that extent—precisely—have they *under*estimated the enduring force of Monod's claim that necessity and chance exhaust our powers of explanation. In my essay, I went no further than this, and I am not prepared to go further now.

Whatever the issue between Mr. Nelson and Jacques Monod, it is (as he says) naturalism that is the real target of the intelligent-design movement, and, I presume, his target as well. If I cheer him on only weakly, that is because it is not entirely clear to me what the target is or how to fight it. From what he writes, I gather that naturalism is embodied in Monod's disjunction itself. But an inference to design is consistent with Monod's disjunction. A designer may have no choice in his design, a point I make in the concluding paragraphs of my essay. But, equally, a denial of Monod's disjunction is consistent with the failure of an inference to design. There may be facts in nature that are the result of neither necessity, chance, nor design, and we must accept the possibility, at least, that the most obvious facts about living systems—their existence and their nature—may have no deeper explanation than that this is the way things are.

Something more is at issue in the assessment of naturalism because something more must be at issue. I encourage Mr. Nelson to make that something clearer.

LEONARD LEVIN'S remarks are subtle and compelling. What he says about quantitative and qualitative aspects of probability is correct. We *do* make qualitative judgments of likelihood even when we are unable to promote those judgments quantitatively. I may not be able to determine the probability that Basque will be declared the official language of the People's Republic of China, but I can say that it is unlikely. Judgments of this sort are in constant use; they are the currency of trade.

But if commonly made, they are also commonly flawed. Our qualitative judgments are often insecure and frequently unstable, a point that emerges more clearly when artificial examples are put aside. Is it more or less likely that North Korea will prove a greater danger than Iraq? Some guesses are possible, but answers may change by the minute as information is presented or withdrawn, one reason that policy analysts often try frantically to place numbers on their judgments.

In pursuing this argument, Mr. Levin draws a suggestive distinction between two cases. In the first, the

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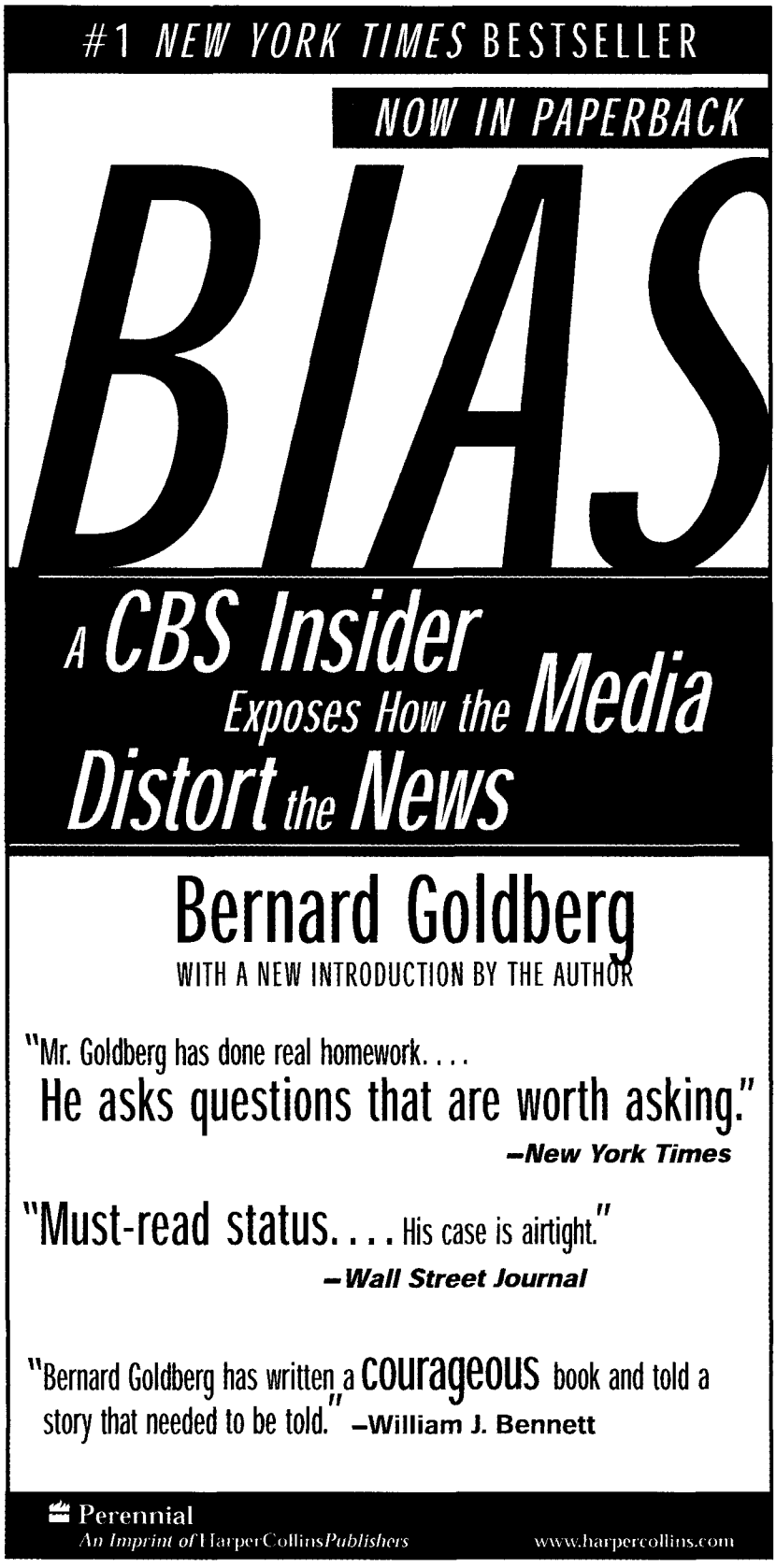
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proverbial monkeys are typing; in the second, they are writing (or scrawling) by hand. It is only the first case, he argues, that permits a quantitative judgment; the second case trails off because, given the monkey's scrawl, we cannot specify any set of discrete objects on which to peg a probability. "The improbability of the . . . monkey writing out a sonnet longhand is not precisely quantifiable, yet it is obviously more improbable than typing it."

Is it? Two events are being compared. The first may be quantified by means of the calculations of probability. The second, Mr. Levin argues, is "not precisely quantifiable." In fact, it is not quantifiable at all. "The monkey may miss a 'G'," Mr. Levin writes, "in only 25 different ways when typing but an indeterminately large number of ways when writing." But if the monkey may miss that "G" in any number of ways, he may also find that "G" in any number of ways. It depends on who is looking and who is counting and what criteria of success are in force. If we cannot assign precise probabilities to one of two events, then we cannot draw comparative judgments between them, either. To say of these events—one quantifiable, the other not—that the second is more improbable than the first is very much like saying of two men that one is taller than the other, given only that one is six feet tall and the other trim.

Mr. Levin complains that biologists have not addressed his questions about molecular syntax. His questions are precisely the questions I discussed in "The Deniable Darwin," and before that in *Black Mischief*.

MICHAEL SHERMAN's letter raises a great many interesting questions, most notably why evolutionary biologists are so dopey. If *he* is "surprised at the weakness of their arguments," imagine how I must feel. But having asked this question, he then asks a more difficult one: why has intellectual change not been

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forthcoming? His own answers are canny but unsatisfying.

Biologists stick to Darwin, he suggests, "because the alternatives do not lead to further research." Now, this is not quite true, as Mr. Sherman himself indicates. The alternatives *do* lead to further research, and he has suggested the agenda. In fact, what is really at stake for most biologists is their chances of being funded, their place at the common trough. But here Mr. Sherman breaks the flow of his own argument. Biologists are not inclined to explore the options he has outlined, he writes, because there is "an overwhelming body of arguments from many fields in favor of evolution." If that is so, then Mr. Sherman has answered his own question in the most straightforward way possible: biologists stick with Darwin's theory because it is *true*. In fact, the "overwhelming body of arguments" to which Mr. Sherman alludes are more overpowering than overwhelming, and like Mexican food they keep coming up without ever quite going down. In this regard, Mr. Sherman has seen the light, but he has not used the light to see.

I am more than prepared to believe that, as Mr. Sherman asserts, formal logic does not often sway evolutionary biologists; as far as I can tell, it does not *ever* sway them. I am also prepared to believe that evolutionary biologists tend to dismiss theories of intelligent design because the authors of those theories publish books rather than peer-reviewed essays. I have already addressed this issue in my reply to Paul Gross, but I would point out that when Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett make *their* views known through trade books, which are, of course, not peer-reviewed, other evolutionary biologists tend to regard those efforts with quiet pride.

In his concluding paragraphs, Mr. Sherman takes an immensely daring position—something like old-fashioned preformationism. Now that he has ventured so far out on a limb, I might observe that something like this is just what recent work on genetic regulatory systems also suggests. Who knows what dreams of glory the earthworm harbors? But for a few parametric changes in its regulatory apparatus, and a missing gene or two, it might rule the world.

I agree with David E. Safir that is it improbable but not impossible that life arose randomly. I would add only that the origins of mind and of matter are equally mysterious. I am not sure, however, what it would mean to make a "choice" of faith on these matters.

Douglas Porter is making too much of my stool. I invoked the thing only to make a modest point: small incremental changes may lead to an irreducibly complex system by paths that Michael Behe did not consider. I agree that biologists have not come to terms with the "colossal improbabilities" of evolution.

I suppose that, as George Jochnowitz suggests, an intelligent designer might have favored evolution as a "brilliant invention," but this claim, which is often made by evolutionary biologists concerned to cover all of their bets, places the conclusion to certain arguments before their premises. How the designer works is one question. What he *did* is another, and this question is logically prior. If certain structures cannot arise by Darwinian means, then, no matter the designer's intentions, he could not have realized them by means of a Darwinian mechanism. He, too, has his limits.

I thank Father Edward T. Oakes for his very generous comments, and would not dream of disputing theology with him. Still, in writing that by the time of Aquinas, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers had come to agree with Aristotle that God is Pure Act, it seems to me that he has underestimated the complexity of Muslim thought. Aquinas, after all, criticized Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence on the grounds that it came perilously close to implying that existence is an accident. Indeed, the more I study the extraordinary record of medieval Arabic thought, the less I am inclined to emphasize its unity and the more to stress its diversity.

The course that Father Oakes traces between the Aristotelian doctrine of Pure Act and its apparent collapse some four centuries later is fascinating, but beyond my competence to assess.

Jaffa Ganz writes to remind me that the concerns expressed in my essay may not matter very much in the end. We do what we can; we ask the questions that we can answer; and as for the rest, we face the illimitable, the unanswerable, and the incomprehensible.

So we do.

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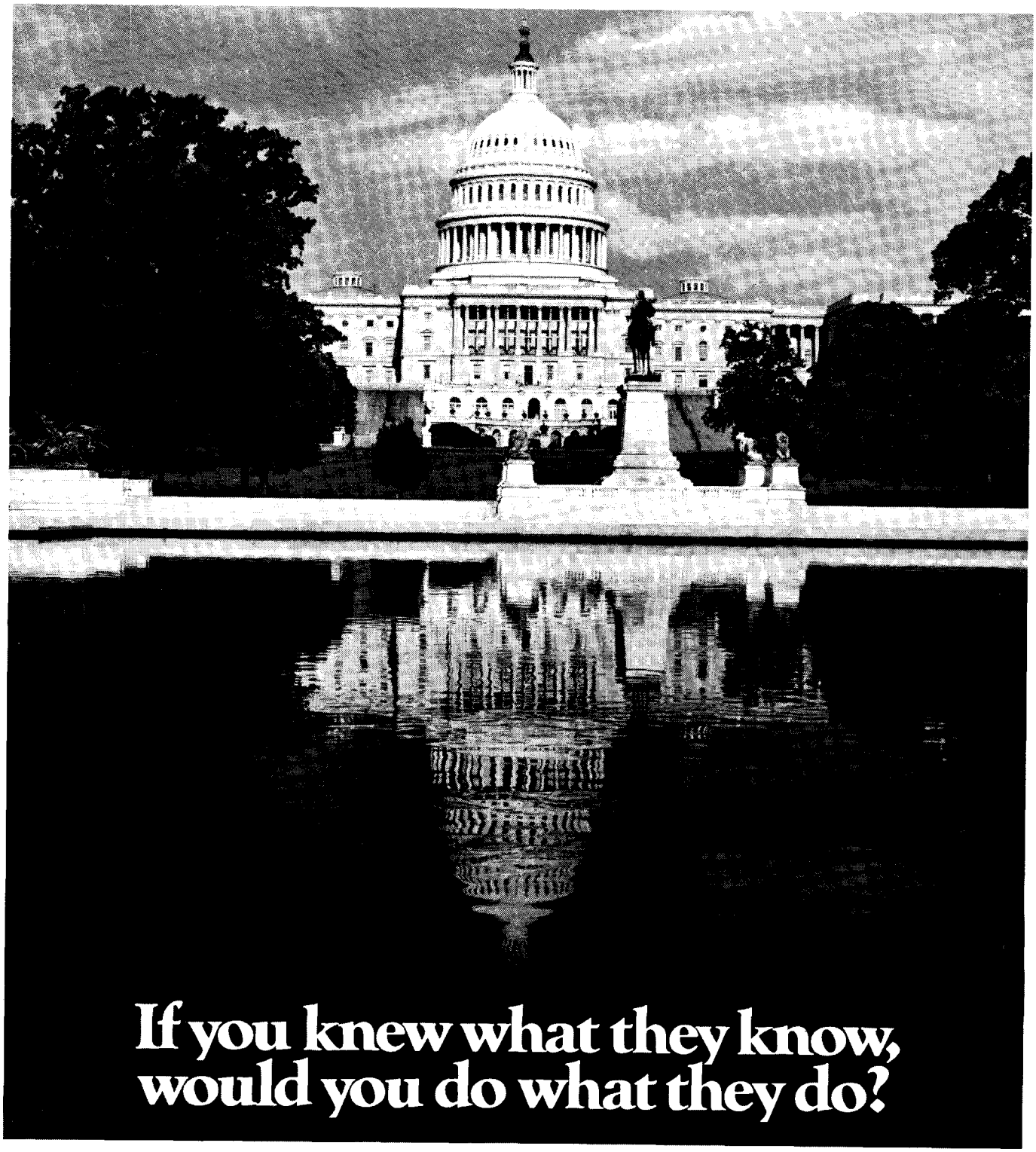

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Commentary
March 2003

Facing Up to North Korea

Joshua Muravchik

EARLY LAST October, North Korea admitted that it had been secretly continuing to develop nuclear weapons despite a 1994 agreement with the U.S. not to. The confession was unapologetic. Not only, said North Korean officials, did they have the uranium-enrichment program that the U.S. had come to suspect them of having, but they possessed other, "more powerful" things as well.

In the period that followed, Pyongyang responded with mounting belligerence to criticism of its defiant violation of the 1994 agreement. For the first time, it openly acknowledged that it actually possessed nuclear weapons (although denying it the very next day). It also began to thaw a "frozen" plutonium program, taking steps to reactivate the nuclear reactor and reprocessing facility at Yongbyon that had been shut down under the same 1994 accord, expelling the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors who were monitoring the site, dismantling IAEA's surveillance equipment, and apparently beginning to remove from storage the fuel rods from which bomb material is directly produced. Ratcheting tensions further, it declared its withdrawal from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), warned Japan that it was going to renew its testing of ballistic missiles, and, for good measure, threatened the U.S. with "uncontrollable catastrophe."

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In the face of all this, and caught in the midst of a confrontation with Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration tried hard to keep its cool. Together with South Korea and Japan, it suspended shipments of the oil that the three countries had been donating to Pyongyang under the 1994 deal; and it beefed up U.S. forces in the region somewhat. But President Bush and his team also took pains to stress that they sought a diplomatic resolution of the crisis. Insisting at first that we would not "negotiate," the administration soon made it clear by a series of small capitulations that this was not the case, and even began to hint at some of the inducements it was prepared to offer. Playing down the gravity of the situation, Secretary of State Colin Powell asked, rhetorically, "What are they going to do with another two or three more nuclear weapons when they're starving, when they have no energy, when they have no economy that's functioning?"

Unfortunately, Powell's question answers itself. Pyongyang's first few nuclear weapons have presumably been reserved against the possibility that America might "go nuclear" in defense of South Korea, and in order to extort succor from frightened nations near and far. As for any additional weapons, what it is likely to do with them is to sell them—just as it has already sold nuclear-capable missiles to Iran, Libya, Syria, and, most recently, Yemen. Such weapons would bring a pretty penny on the well-established trade routes that connect Pyongyang to Tehran, Tripoli, and Damascus, or new ones that

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may reach to the murky haunts of Osama bin Laden and the remnants of his organization. As the arms-control expert Gary Milhollin has put it: "The cash-strapped North Koreans have sold everything [of a military nature] they have produced." Although North Korea might be dissuaded from *launching* nuclear weapons by the threat of retaliation in kind, such deterrence is no answer to proliferation.

And it may not be a matter of just "two or three" more, in Powell's phrase. We do not know how much uranium the North Koreans have enriched, or what they mean by saying they have another, "more powerful" program. The fuel rods apparently removed from Yongbyon could quickly yield a handful of bombs, and the small reactor being reactivated there could produce another one or two a year. Completion of the two much larger reactors whose construction was suspended in 1994 would supply the North Koreans or their customers with enough fissionable material annually for dozens more bombs. If we cannot stop them, as we have been trying without success to do for some twenty years, we face the prospect of North Korea's becoming, in Richard Perle's phrase, the "nuclear breadbasket of the world"—or at least of the underworld of failed states and terror bands.

Here, then, is an especially terrifying version of the nightmare of which President Bush has spoken since September 11, 2001: weapons of mass destruction, further along in their development than those of Saddam Hussein, no less likely to be supplied to terrorists, and in the possession of a country about which our sources of information are even weaker than in the case of Iraq.

HOW DID we get into this fix? The story is both tedious and instructive—and, for anyone who has followed the cat-and-mouse game played by Saddam Hussein over the last twelve years, eerily evocative.

North Korea began to construct a nuclear reactor large enough to produce material for weapons in 1979. In 1985, in conjunction with a deal for a reactor, and under pressure from us, the Soviets persuaded their then-ally to sign the non-proliferation treaty. But sighs of relief proved premature.

Nations that join the NPT have another eighteen months in which to sign a "safeguards agreement" with the IAEA, under which they openly declare their nuclear programs and arrange for inspectors to monitor them. Eighteen months passed, and then an extension of another eighteen, and still North Korea did not sign. Finally, in 1989, it announced a condition—it would sign if South Korea agreed to turn the entire Korean peninsula into a nuclear-free zone. That same year, while this ostensible olive branch hung in the air, Pyongyang was busily advancing its nuclear program, shutting down its reactor for two to three months in order, apparently, to remove fuel rods for reprocessing into weapons material (while continuing to deny any such nefarious intention).

Over the next two years, Pyongyang stonewalled, insisting not only that the entire peninsula be "denuclearized" but that the annual U.S.-South Korean military exercise called "Team Spirit" be canceled and that the U.S. pledge not to attack the North. Although Washington initially resisted these demands—on the grounds that the tactical nuclear weapons we maintained in the South constituted an essential counterweight to North Korea's overwhelming artillery presence along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas—gradually it yielded. In September 1991, President George H. W. Bush announced the withdrawal of all U.S. nuclear weapons from the South.

It did not help; quite the contrary. North Korea first said it would not permit inspections until the withdrawal had actually been completed, and then declared it would permit such inspections only if the U.S. allowed inspections of its own military facilities in the South. By December 1991, the Bush administration had said yes to this, too.

Meanwhile, South Korea, its habitual toughness vitiated by America's string of concessions, had launched its own policy of conciliation. In November, the government in Seoul unilaterally renounced the manufacture, possession, or use of nuclear or chemical weapons, and in December it signed a non-aggression pact that made no mention of the North's nuclear programs but included pledges of economic exchange that would disproportionately benefit the North. The next month, January 1992, the two Koreas agreed to ban nuclear weapons from the peninsula—and still North Korea had not signed a "safeguards" agreement.

To sweeten the pot further, President Bush now announced cancellation of the annual Team Spirit exercises. Sure enough, on January 31, Pyongyang signed an inspection plan with the IAEA—but declared immediately thereafter that the plan would have to be ratified by its "legislature," a process slated to take several months. While these deliberations, such as they were, were under way, U.S. surveillance cameras observed convoys of trucks hauling things away from known nuclear sites; in February, following testimony by CIA director Robert Gates to Congress, the *New York Times* reported "a growing consensus in the Bush adminis-

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tration" that North Korea "remains intent on continuing its nuclear-weapons program."

Pyongyang did eventually ratify the accord. But its formal declaration to the IAEA failed to specify how much plutonium it had produced, and its list of nuclear facilities omitted an all-important reprocessing plant at Yongbyon, a multistory facility the length of two football fields that Pyongyang labeled a "radiochemical laboratory." When the director of the IAEA—it was Hans Blix—protested, Pyongyang allowed the plant to be added to the list, at the same time floating the suggestion that it would give up the facility entirely if the West would supply it with light-water reactors, which it said it wanted in order to generate electricity. (The claim that its nuclear program was intended solely to provide electricity was put forward many times by the North, although it never took steps to link any of its reactors to the nation's electricity grid.)

Another dispute developed over two other sites at Yongbyon that U.S. intelligence believed were being used for nuclear waste. One was a large two-story building around which the Koreans had been observed bulldozing mounds of earth to bury the first story prior to the arrival of inspectors. If the two buildings were indeed waste sites, examination of them might have enabled inspectors to deduce how much plutonium North Korea had reprocessed and thus how many bombs it had produced. But Pyongyang repeatedly rebuffed Blix's requests for access. The quarrel culminated in March 1993 with North Korea's announcement that it was withdrawing from the NPT.

By now the Clinton era had begun. Following the example of the Bush administration, the Clinton team likewise tried to lure North Korea with incentives, offering to allow inspection of U.S. military facilities in South Korea and pledging noninterference in the North's internal affairs. In exchange, Pyongyang agreed to "suspend" its withdrawal from the NPT, while adamantly continuing to disallow inspections of the suspected waste sites. By now, indeed, it was also refusing access to the seven *declared* nuclear sites that inspectors had been permitted to visit the previous year. And, just to reinforce the sense of menace, on the day after suspending its withdrawal from the NPT it test-fired a mid-range ballistic missile capable of reaching Japanese cities with a chemical or nuclear payload.

In November 1993, President Clinton underscored the gravity of the threat. "North Korea," he said, "cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb. We have to be very firm about it." Yet in the next weeks administration officials also said they were prepared to offer new inducements, in particular by placing on the back burner the urgent demand for inspection of the two suspected waste sites. As one State Department official told the *Washington Post*, the administration's new strategy was to "walk softly and carry a big carrot."

Not big enough, apparently. The next month, December 1993, the *New York Times* reported a CIA assessment concluding that North Korea already possessed one or two nuclear bombs. But far from stiffening Washington's attitude, this seemed to breed a mood of submission. Soon, a White House spokesman was saying the President had "misspoken" about not allowing North Korea to have nuclear weapons, and Washington even tried to soften the approach of the IAEA, then as now a UN agency hardly known for firmness, by discouraging it from bringing Pyongyang's nonfeasance to the Security Council.

After another round of diplomacy, and in exchange for fresh American concessions, the two sides announced a new deal allowing inspections of declared sites to go forward. (The two undeclared waste sites were now so far on the back burner as to be entirely lost from view.) The returning inspectors found the seals they had left on equipment broken; when they tried to take samples from the reprocessing plant to see what had been done, the North Koreans sent them packing. "This time," a Clinton official told the *Times*, "the North went too far. There are no more carrots." "We are going to stop them," said Defense Secretary William Perry resolutely. "I'd rather face [the risk of war] than face the risk of even greater catastrophe two or three years from now." But within a couple of weeks, Secretary of State Warren Christopher was explaining that the U.S. was willing to negotiate for another six months, and Perry pulled in his horns.

In May 1994, North Korea brought matters to a head by announcing that it was removing spent fuel from its Yongbyon reactor without international monitoring. Removal of the 8,000 fuel rods posed a double whammy. If inspectors could not sample them, there would be no way of tracing how much plutonium had previously been recovered from the reactor. Plus, additional plutonium could now be taken, presumably enough to make several more bombs. At this point, the IAEA declared that it could no longer assure that North Korea's program was not being used for weapons, and North Korea, trumpeting defiance, resigned its membership in the agency. Washington began eliciting support for economic sanctions and beefed up its military forces in the region. Talk of war was in the air.

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But the threat of conflagration was laid to rest by an astonishing diplomatic intervention by former President Jimmy Carter. An outspoken critic of U.S. policy for being too hard on North Korea, Carter flew to Pyongyang for some personal diplomacy with Kim Il Sung, a ruthless dictator who had been handpicked for his job by Stalin himself. Where previous Western visitors to Pyongyang had described a city darkened by power shortages, with little commerce and a populace terrified to be seen conversing with foreigners, Carter reported a bustling metropolis with shops much like the "Wal-Mart in Americus, Georgia," neon lights that reminded him of "Times Square," and a population that was "friendly and open."

The wonders of the city were but a prelude to what Carter found when he came face to face with Kim. The dictator, he discovered, was "revered" and "treated as a combination of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abe Lincoln." Carter also found Kim "very friendly toward Christianity." Although now in his eighties, Kim was "vigorous, intelligent, surprisingly well-informed," and "very frank." What is more, by showing Kim proper respect, Carter had achieved a "miracle": the basis for a new agreement.

In the ensuing months, Washington and Pyongyang reached an "agreed framework" under which North Korea would freeze its existing plutonium program. In exchange, it was to receive two light-water reactors and—pending their completion—500,000 metric tons of heavy oil annually, amounting to about 40 percent of the country's fuel consumption. The reactors and the oil were to come as gifts, paid for by South Korea, Japan, the U.S., and Europe. In addition, various trade and diplomatic restrictions, the legacy of North Korea's invasion of the South decades earlier and of terrorist attacks that had continued into the 1980's, were to be lifted.

In the U.S., the deal came in for a fair amount of criticism. It seemed to reward Pyongyang for its defiance of the NPT, thereby setting a dangerous precedent. It left the plutonium facilities intact and spent fuel inside the country, thus allowing the program to be restarted easily. Moreover, the light-water reactors could themselves produce plutonium, and although in some respects less conducive to a weapons program, they were far from weapons-proof. Indeed, Washington was at that very moment trying to dissuade Russia from supplying such reactors to Iran.

But the deal was also defended. For the time being, it had stopped North Korea's program in its tracks. And in the long run, it was said, there was reason to hope that the bankrupt North Korean regime would collapse before the light-water reactors were up and running and producing plutonium, a process that was estimated at about ten years. "Five years from now, North Korea is not going to be there," the *Washington Post* quoted a senior Defense Department official as saying; the paper added that by then, according to intelligence assessments, "North Korea's economic troubles could topple its leadership and force unification with South Korea."

Today, more than eight years later, North Korea is still there, and is still ruled by the Kim dynasty, Kim Il Sung having been succeeded upon his death by his son, Kim Jong Il. The merits of the "agreed framework" are a moot point. Pyongyang was cheating on it all along, the inexorably mounting evidence to this effect having culminated in North Korea's momentous proclamation of last October.

GIVEN THIS history, only a fraction of whose tortuous windings and humiliating frustrations I have been able to convey, it is nothing short of astonishing that today, political leaders like Jimmy Carter and even Senator Joseph Lieberman, as well as columnists like the *New York Times*'s Paul Krugman, the *Washington Post*'s Richard Cohen, and *Newsweek*'s Fareed Zakaria, rushed to lay the entire crisis at the door of George W. Bush. But so they did. In describing North Korea as part of the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union Address, and otherwise rebuffing it, the new President, or so the line went, had driven Pyongyang to misbehave. "Put yourself in Kim Jong Il's shoes," pleaded Krugman. According to this logic, the new crisis consisted not of North Korea's nuclear-weapons program, which had commenced years before Bush came to office, but of the fact that we had somehow coerced the North Koreans into confessing to it.

Yet far from being the fault of this administration, the fix we are in is the fruit of a long pattern of appeasement and of North Korea's canny manipulation of our illusions and fears. Once we discovered that Pyongyang was indeed building a nuclear reactor, we spent five or six years getting it to sign the NPT, then another seven years securing its signature to a "safeguards" agreement, then three more vainly trying to induce it to abide by that agreement. We finally abandoned the effort in favor of a "framework," which eight years later it admitted it had been disregarding all along. At the core of this pathetic tale was our reluctance to consider that the goal of the North Koreans' nuclear-weapons program was *to possess nuclear weapons*—and that diplomatic and economic incentives to avert this goal might be of no avail. In place of a frank recognition

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of this reality, we substituted our vain hopes that North Korea's rulers could be softened by concessions, and that what they really wanted was economic aid, political legitimacy, and "respect."

How, then, do we get out of the fix? Even after the disclosure in late January of the apparent removal of 8,000 fuel rods from Yongbyon, the Bush team has continued to insist that the matter will be solved by diplomacy, and has appealed to Russia and China for help. Jimmy Carter has urged us to offer new incentives to Pyongyang, as has former Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen and commentators like the *Times*'s Nicholas Kristof and Bill Keller. "More for more," Keller has proposed, meaning sweeping nuclear disarmament by North Korea in exchange for a much richer package of economic and political benefits than it has been offered before.

But the problem with all of these proposals, quite apart from the fact that they seem to ignore our experience, is that even if we struck a grand bargain there would be no way of knowing that the other side was keeping its word. "Diplomacy" might indeed get us a deal; but what would it be worth?

The North Koreans are master diggers. The DMZ is said to be honeycombed with tunnels through which vast quantities of military personnel and equipment can invade the South in any new Korean war. (Some of these tunnels have been discovered and closed; no one doubts that many undiscovered ones remain.) As best we can make out, the North Koreans have also built underground nuclear reactors, plutonium-reprocessing plants, and uranium-enrichment facilities—and who knows what else? Iraq, as we discovered after the 1991 war, had built an entire nuclear program right under the nose of the IAEA, all the while complying with every inspection request. The hilly terrain of North Korea is more conducive to concealment than the flat sands of Iraq, and North Korea's is a much more closed society. As helpless as inspectors have been in finding Iraq's weapons, they would be more helpless still in North Korea.

In contrast to those who want to offer new inducements, several tougher-minded commentators have called for "isolating" North Korea through UN sanctions. But it is doubtful that even the strictest sanctions would make a dent, since North Korea is already, by its own choosing, one of the world's most isolated nations. It is even more doubtful that the UN Security Council would apply the strictest sanctions.

Only China has the leverage to squeeze North Korea hard, since, now that we have suspended our oil shipments, North Korea depends almost entirely on that country for fuel. But China has so far insisted, as it has always done, that our issues with Pyongyang be resolved through "dialogue."

Another proposal, this one by Charles Krauthammer, is to help Japan to become a nuclear power, on the reasoning that the threat of a nuclear Japan is the only way to pressure China to turn the screws on North Korea. Clever though it is, this leads to the same problem as the proposals for wooing Kim with new inducements. Any diplomatic solution—whether it is secured by twisting Kim's arm or by caressing his cheek—ends up in a deal that has to be verified, and there can be no confidence in our ability to verify the North's nuclear disarmament. We do not know what weapons or nuclear programs it has, and there is no sure way to find out so long as Kim rules the country.

The same fatal flaw sinks another proposal, by John O'Sullivan, for an "inglorious deal" whereby North Korea would receive various benefits and be allowed to keep its nuclear capabilities in exchange for ceasing to sell to others. The logic of focusing on the proliferation threat is admittedly compelling. In itself, a nuclear-armed North Korea might be less dangerous than a nuclear-armed Iraq. It would be easier for us to protect North Korea's few neighbors, and unlike in the case of Iraq, whose military might ramifies throughout the Middle Eastern and Arab worlds, North Korea influences almost nobody. But would a commitment not to transfer nuclear components be any more verifiable than a commitment not to develop them? Smuggling is an easier art than tunneling, and if North Koreans can hide entire reactors, they can surely hide the passage of a few bombs.

The Heritage Foundation's John Tkacik has suggested tackling the proliferation problem by means of an air and sea embargo of North Korea. Perhaps this would work, but one fiendish thing about nuclear material is that it is not large. As a rule of thumb, the IAEA says, eight kilograms of plutonium are required to make a bomb. Add to that the shielding needed to transport the stuff, and you still can move it in a small airplane or boat. It is doubtful we have the technical means to spot and interdict all such craft. Moreover, any such effort would require Chinese cooperation.

Ultimately, the world is likely to be safe with North Korea, as with Iraq, only through the demise of its current government. In 1994, we believed that the Kim dynasty was likely to fall of its own dead weight, just as we thought that Saddam Hussein would fall in 1991 after his humiliating defeat in the "mother of all battles." Predicting the fall of dicta-

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tors is clearly a chancy business. In the hope of opening fissures in the closed polity of North Korea, a group of neoconservative intellectuals, including Max Kampelman, R. James Woolsey, and Penn Kemble, have suggested adding human-rights issues to the diplomatic agenda. A fine idea; but the only way to *assure* regime change in North Korea is through military action.

But war, we have been told by numerous analysts as well as implicitly by the Bush administration, is "unthinkable." The North Koreans have hundreds of thousands of soldiers and thousands of artillery pieces arrayed in and around the DMZ. Their shells can reach Seoul. Any war would mean the deaths of many thousands of South Korean soldiers and civilians, and many of the 37,000 American troops stationed on the front lines. This is not even to mention whatever harm the North might manage to inflict with its nuclear devices.

Horrible, war would be. But to say that it is unthinkable is once again to hide our head in the sand. Pyongyang itself suffers under no such illusions and no such inhibitions. For its part, it insists that economic sanctions will be taken as an act of war, implying that it would respond with military strikes. Indeed, far from having viewed war with us as unthinkable, the North has calculated its demands on us over the years—that we remove our tactical nuclear weapons, that we persuade the South Koreans to forswear nuclear weapons of their own, that we cancel joint military exercises with Seoul—precisely in order to weaken our ability to resist its own military power. These demands we have systematically granted.

Not only does the North's belligerence leave us no choice but to "think" about war, we cannot exclude the possibility of initiating military action ourselves. Part of the cause of our present predicament is that we ruled out the use of force at earlier points in this saga—when, however painful, it would have been less costly than today. And today it may be less costly than a few years from now, when North Korea will have dozens of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles (it has tested one that could reach Alaska) or when it will have shared them with al Qaeda and others.

IS THERE anything to be learned from the appalling choices we find ourselves facing? The *New York Times* editorialized in January that Pyongyang's confession had "blown apart the Bush administration's months-long effort to portray Saddam Hussein as uniquely dangerous." The implication was that the North Korean menace spoke against the policy of disarming Iraq by force. What it really did was the opposite. It illustrated how such threats grow ever worse if they are not dealt with resolutely. Contrary to those who airily put their trust in "containment," it gave us a glimpse into how much more dangerous the world would be if we allowed Iraq to join North Korea in the nuclear club. Since appeasement has only emboldened the North Koreans, perhaps making an example of Saddam Hussein may take some of the wind out of their nuclear sails.

In short, our experience with North Korea confirms anew the folly of appeasement and the frailty of "parchment barriers"—not to mention the wisdom of missile defense. Above all, it points up the error of lowering our guard. Since the cold war ended, we were living in something of a fool's paradise. All of the conflicts in which we were embroiled after the fall of Communism—Kuwait, Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo—were minor in comparison to our decades-long tussle with the Soviet empire. Although the issues were real, the dangers were always contingent, and we enjoyed a wide margin for error. Accordingly, we progressively reduced the size of our military and our spending on weapons until we abandoned, first in practice and then in doctrine, the capacity to wage wars simultaneously on two fronts. The result was, and is, that our ability to confront North Korea is constrained by our mobilization around Iraq—a fact that by itself helps to explain the brazenness of the North Koreans.

With the fall of the Soviet empire, as Francis Fukuyama eloquently explained more than a dozen years ago, no ideology remained to rival our own. Neither was there any foe on the horizon that could hope to vanquish us. Modern weapons, however, endow even a minor power with the capability of wreaking terrible damage, and of killing Americans in larger numbers than Hitler or Tojo. That such weapons can be fielded by North Korea, a country so miserable that infinitely more of its people are eating grass than are shopping at "Wal-Marts," underscores how far removed we are from the old calculus in which military potency derived from industrial might.

The ideological competitors with democracy and capitalism have indeed faded. But these were mostly phenomena of the 20th century. What has remained is something older and deeper: the atavistic impulses of self-aggrandizement and nihilism. How else to classify the motor force behind the dynasty-Communism of the Kims, the Baathism-cum-Islamism of Saddam, the twisted preachings of bin Laden? When there are no longer powerful men like these, then we may truly begin to speak of the end of history. Until then, the preservation of all we hold dear will require unillusioned clarity, vigilance, courage—and, it is to be feared, sacrifice.

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Did We Fail in Afghanistan?

Frederick W. Kagan

PRESIDENT BUSH and his advisers have repeatedly stated that our goal in Iraq is to remove a vicious regime from power and replace it with a stable democratic government pursuing a responsible foreign policy. That is also what we have tried to do in Afghanistan, a very different country from Iraq but one where our objectives have been the same. It is increasingly clear, however, that in Afghanistan our efforts to bring stability have encountered serious problems. A reconsideration of our war there is thus an essential precondition for success in our next conflict.

THE U.S. war in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, when bombs from about 40 aircraft and 50 submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles struck targets with the objective of giving allied forces undisputed control of Afghanistan's airspace. Within the first few days, these strikes had destroyed the Taliban's air-defense capability and damaged its military airfields. Thereafter, the U.S. continued to hit command-and-control targets and terrorist training centers while also attacking Taliban and al Qaeda troop, vehicle, and artillery concentrations. In the meantime, U.S. forces dropped tens of thousands of food rations to demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan that the strikes were aimed not at the civilian populace but exclusively at the Taliban and al Qaeda.

On October 19, the first U.S. Special Forces A-Team linked up with forces under the command of General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Now the war began to change character as, beginning October 21, air strikes were called in directly in support of Northern Alliance troops. Generally, the Afghans would indicate what targets they wanted hit and American soldiers would identify the targets, holding laser pointers on them for our smart bombs to home in on. Taliban and al Qaeda fighters were shocked by the extreme precision of these strikes—so unlike their experience fighting the Soviets during the 1980's—and the front lines began to collapse rapidly. Dostum's forces, most of them on horseback, fought a series of engagements culminating on November 10 with the capture of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The collapse accelerated from that point. The capital city of Kabul was captured without a fight on November 11. Operations then focused on expanding control of the country to the south and west, including the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, and reducing a pocket of several thousand Taliban and al Qaeda fighters trapped in the northern city of Konduz. The struggle in the southwest continued until December 7, when the Taliban leadership abandoned Kandahar and fled.

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The fall of Kandahar, which ended Taliban rule in Afghanistan, also concluded the first major phase of the war. Since that time, American forces have been engaged in hunting down remnants of Taliban and al Qaeda forces that have gone into hiding around the country, especially in the mountainous areas along the Pakistani border. Twice, U.S. forces have located substantial enemy forces in that area and given battle: in December 2001, when U.S. and Afghan forces struck a cave complex near Tora Bora, and in March 2002, when there was a large-scale, joint U.S.-Afghan attack dubbed Operation Anaconda. Although there have been no operations on a similar scale since then, fighting continues, most recently in a complex of caves near Spinbaldak in the southeast.

The received wisdom is that the first phase of the war (October 7 through December 7) was overwhelmingly successful—and, some have claimed, ushered in a whole new way of waging war. In particular, it is said that the use of limited numbers of ground forces, working with indigenous fighters to designate targets for precision-guided munitions fired from American aircraft and ships, provides a model that can and should be copied in future conflicts. Although others have questioned whether this "Afghan model" can be generalized to other theaters and circumstances, its success in Afghanistan itself has gone virtually unquestioned.

Criticism has focused, instead, on the second phase of the struggle. The picture of our military actions in the period after December 7 is in fact complicated. The battle for the caves near Tora Bora had but limited success, while operation Anaconda is considered to have fared better. But what has come under consistent question is the stability of the political situation, and even the degree to which we have achieved or can now hope to achieve our fundamental political objectives in Afghanistan. Warlords are said to control significant portions of the country, persistent violence may be undermining the emergence of a legitimate order under President Hamid Karzai, and al Qaeda operatives are reported to have set up new training camps in eastern Afghanistan. What is more, the locus of the problem seems to have shifted to the tribal areas in Pakistan, where, it is believed, many fighters have taken refuge and have begun reestablishing their organization.

An important obstacle to any understanding of the conflict is that the two major phases of the war have been considered independently. Specialists in military affairs study the campaign of October-December 2001 plus Operation Anaconda, largely ignoring their implications for the subsequent political turmoil. Students of Afghanistan's political situation, on the other hand, tend to ignore the significance of the way in which the military campaign was itself conducted. Neither approach by itself will do.

AMERICA ATTACKED Afghanistan in order to achieve three major objectives. First and foremost, as senior members of the Bush administration stressed at the time, we hoped to destroy al Qaeda forces there, as part of our global campaign to uproot that organization completely. Second, we wanted to capture or kill Osama bin Laden (although we also said the success of the operation did not depend on this). Third, we wanted to decapitate and drive from power the Taliban government, which many believed was "joined at the hip" to al Qaeda. The overall goal, identified by the President himself on October 7, was to create a situation in which Afghanistan could no longer serve as a haven and training base for al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations.

The critical decision not to inject American ground forces into the theater in any but the smallest numbers was made early on. There were several bases for it. Among them was a fear of American casualties, itself resting on an overestimate of the abilities of the ragtag Taliban forces and the small number of al Qaeda fighters and, no doubt, on an (erroneous) understanding both of our own experience in Vietnam and of the Soviets' debacle in Afghanistan. Another fear, also drawn from the Soviet experience, was that the presence of large numbers of American troops might excite Afghan patriotism and religious zeal and generate a country-wide guerrilla war. Still another element had to do with the perceived need to start operations hastily, combined with considerations of geography.

For a variety of reasons, Bush was determined to act as rapidly as possible. Unfortunately, Afghanistan is a landlocked country, and getting permission from its neighbors for basing aircraft or even for prolonged over-flights was not an easy matter. Moreover, some of the Army units thought to be most appropriate for larger-scale combat in Afghanistan, like the 101st Air Assault Division, were difficult to transport rapidly. There was also a belief in some quarters that the Army's "excessively heavy" ground forces were altogether of limited relevance in modern, fast-moving crises. This, together with pessimistic estimates of the time needed to get large numbers to the country and of what they might do once there, sidelined any serious consideration

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of an early introduction of substantial ground forces.

In the event, the President decided on a plan proposed by the director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet. This involved inserting CIA operatives into Afghanistan with fistfuls of money to support indigenous groups hostile to the Taliban and to bribe the many tribal leaders who were for sale. The plan seemed to offer the best of all possible worlds. The war would be fought by Afghans—which meant, on the one hand, that there would be few if any American casualties and, on the other, that it would not "feel" like a foreign invasion. Everything could be done quickly, since the Northern Alliance already had fighters in the field and the CIA already had agents in the theater. And it was militarily feasible. With the extensive use of American precision-guided munitions, rebel forces could easily topple the unpopular Taliban, as long as the war did not turn into a patriotic struggle of Afghans against Americans.*

Still, the Tenet plan did run into a number of early snags. It proved trickier than expected to obtain even limited basing rights in the countries along Afghanistan's northern border, thus delaying the onset of the bombing campaign. It also took longer than anticipated to get Special Forces A-Teams into the country to help direct the attacks of our ships and aircraft. The first team did not link up with the Northern Alliance until October 19, and the first coordinated airstrike did not take place until two days later. As a result, there was a period in mid- and late October in which we seemed to be making no progress and during which, as many readers will recall, it began to be murmured at home that we were entering a "quagmire."

But as soon as sufficient assets were in place, and our allies on the ground were confident we would support them, the end came very quickly. Although al Qaeda forces themselves fought fanatically, many of the Taliban troops lost what little motivation they possessed once they had been driven out of their defensive positions and into the open.

We were thus able to remove the Taliban from power relatively easily, cheaply, and quickly. But removing the Taliban had been only one of our objectives. Our other and arguably more important goals were seriously impaired.

One of those goals was to eliminate al Qaeda forces from Afghanistan. A plan for accomplishing that should have involved encircling them wherever they concentrated their forces and destroying them in place. Every effort should have been made to deny them the ability to maneuver and withdraw, since it was well known that Afghanistan's topography offered many places in which they could hide.

The trouble was that our allies' forces were concentrated almost exclusively in the northern part of the country, and thus were unavailable to prevent fleeing Taliban and, more important, al Qaeda fighters from taking refuge in the extremely rough terrain south and east of Kabul along the Pakistan border. And in any case such an operation was well beyond the capacity (or for that matter the inclination) of our indigenous allies to conduct. It could only have been undertaken by American ground forces, using the superior mobility provided by their helicopters and, to a lesser extent, vehicles. From the account given in Bob Woodward's *Bush at War*, it seems not to have occurred to Bush's cabinet to address this issue until the fall of Kabul was already imminent, when it was too late.

Another drawback of the war plan was that it left the U.S. politically beholden to its indigenous allies, primarily the Northern Alliance. Although the majority of Afghans are Pashtun tribesmen, the Northern Alliance comprised minority Uzbeks and Tajiks. Ethnic tensions in Afghanistan are a complex matter, but under any circumstances it would be difficult to imagine a stable Afghan state in which Pashtuns were ruled over by Tajiks and Uzbeks. Since we had neither a ground presence in the country nor any real political base among the Pashtuns themselves, our leverage was severely restricted. The result was the formation of a government composed of a Pashtun president, Hamid Karzai, the head of one of the two Pashtun groups that had provided significant help in the fight against the Taliban in the south, and Tajiks in almost all of the other most important positions. This wobbly arrangement has gravely compromised Karzai's efforts to form a political order that is widely felt to be legitimate.

Worse yet, many of the principal leaders in the Northern Alliance are radical Islamists themselves, people who opposed the Taliban for political and other reasons but who, if left to their own devices, would not establish a state that we would find suitable. We have been obliged to try to force some of these extremists from power.

An even more serious flaw was that the indigenous army, though strong enough to push an unpopular regime from power with American support,

* It should be noted that the armed forces did not, on the whole, share the CIA's confidence. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld repeatedly commented on the "toughness" of the enemy and hinted that active combat might stretch well into 2002.

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was not and is not strong enough to establish control over the country. Indeed, as I have already suggested and as numerous reports confirm, Karzai's forces would seem to control little beyond the immediate environs of Kabul, while much of the rest of the country is under the sway of warlords who are using the money given to them by the CIA to maintain their own private palatinates. The measures that we took in support of the "Afghan model" of war have thus ended up exacerbating the security challenge to the new government.

IT IS here that the seductive lure of airpower played an especially mischievous role—and, in the aftermath of Afghanistan, has continued to obscure planning for future conflicts. According to one enthusiast, the war in Afghanistan "proved the validity of a *concept*: U.S. and allied airpower can work efficiently with local ground forces to accomplish the combatant commander's objectives" (emphasis added). Another student of the war has put the point more soberly: "Many now believe that [the] Afghan model could be used elsewhere with comparable effect," the main "elsewhere" being, of course, Iraq. This same writer adds: "Many see it more broadly still—as a new 'American way of war' applicable across a wide range of future conflict types."

Proponents of this new "American way of war" cite a number of benefits, some of which we have already rehearsed. The Afghan model—that is, the combination of special-operations forces, precision-guided munitions, and an indigenous ally—minimizes the exposure of American soldiers to danger, and is thought also to minimize local opposition to any American-led action. It reduces the lag time between a decision to overthrow a regime and the beginning of operations. It avoids any danger of a Vietnam-style morass, since, unlike slow-moving and unwieldy ground forces, air and naval forces flying from nearby bases can fly away again easily if an operation goes poorly. It maximizes our advantages in technology, advantages that lie not only in our long-range precision weapons but also in the communications systems that connect the soldier on the ground to the missile-launcher hundreds of miles away. Finally, it allows us to choose targets discriminately, thus reducing the risk of civilian casualties, and to increase or decrease pressure as the overall situation warrants.

There is no gainsaying the values that underlie this approach or the worthiness of its aims. It is undoubtedly desirable to avoid putting our young men and women in harm's way as much as we can, to tailor the use of force to our objectives as precisely as we can, and to begin our operations as rapidly and end them as expeditiously as we can. There is also little question that this approach did, in fact, work spectacularly well in Afghanistan—at least in taking down an enemy government quickly and at the lowest possible cost in American lives.

But, to repeat, simply removing the Taliban from power was never our sole aim, or indeed our main aim—and the way we achieved that aim compromised our other, more important ones. The military operation, although it succeeded at a very low cost and in a very short time, failed to establish a situation conducive to achieving America's longer-term objectives in Afghanistan, or for that matter in the war on terror generally. Nor was this result accidental; it reveals a problem that lies at the very core of the Afghan model.

Unless we are dealing with a situation of outright civil war, in which the side we are backing has already established a significant military force in its own right, the Afghan model virtually ensures that the state in which we are intervening will collapse into chaos once the enemy government falls. It is not possible, especially in the confusing circumstances surrounding such a war, rapidly to recruit and train an army reliably loyal to the new regime. Although this may not present a hindrance to overthrowing the enemy government—our enormous advantage in airpower can tip the scales in favor of even very weak indigenous rebel ground forces—we cannot continue to use airpower to support that force as it attempts to gain control of the country against bandits, regional warlords, or rival schismatics.

In sum, in Afghanistan or anywhere else, the absence of American ground forces deprives us of the ability to control political conditions during and immediately after the fall of the enemy government. We are unable to intervene quickly to push the situation in the direction of greater stability, to disarm opponents of the new government peacefully and without killing them, or to ensure that *our* objectives—such as, in this case, the rooting out of al Qaeda operatives—are pursued aggressively and in a timely manner. The use of American ground forces in substantial numbers from the outset is absolutely essential—not so much to win the war as to establish the necessary preconditions for winning the peace.

WHAT WOULD the early introduction of ground forces into Afghanistan have accomplished? When a large number of al Qaeda fighters were found to be concentrating in caves near Tora Bora, American airpower, even directed by Special Forces

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teams on the ground in support of local allies, proved unable to trap and destroy them—hundreds of fighters, almost certainly including the top leadership, got away. A relatively small number of U.S. ground forces—on the order of several battalions of helicopter-borne infantry—could have set up ambush and blocking positions along the obvious lines of retreat, and along the high ground dominating secondary routes as well. Although some would certainly have slipped away anyway, we could have prevented the large-scale escapes that actually occurred and perhaps have captured or killed a substantial portion of the al Qaeda leadership now at large.

U.S. forces deployed rapidly around Kabul could also have served as guardians of the gates of the capital, able either to take the city themselves or to allow it to be taken by an international force or, if we so decided, by the Northern Alliance. In the event, we had no option but to allow the Northern Alliance to seize the capital (although the President, Colin Powell, and General Tommy Franks vainly tried to prevent this) and stake a claim to the subsequent governance of the country. Other American forces would have played valuable roles in trapping and killing al Qaeda and seizing critical spots elsewhere throughout the country.

All in all, one Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) plus an Army division and perhaps a little more would have been adequate to trap and eliminate concentrations of al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and provide the essential leverage we needed to control the development of the political situation. Nor, it is perhaps necessary to add, would the deployment of such a force have prevented us from contemplating war against Iraq: the Marines maintain three MEF's and the Army ten active combat divisions, several of which, like the 10th Mountain Division, would have been suitable for combat in Afghanistan but not in Iraq.

Could we have sent these forces early enough and in sufficient numbers? The answer to both questions is certainly yes. The main objections to doing so, remember, were the fear of casualties, the fear of inciting a patriotic Afghan resistance, and the difficulties of rapid transportation. All three could have been readily countered.

There was, in fact, no reason to suspect that the Taliban or al Qaeda could inflict significant casualties on properly equipped American ground forces, especially if those forces were supported, as they certainly would have been, by an air campaign as intense, as precise, and as lethal as the one that was actually fought. If, under such circumstances, the poorly equipped and trained Northern Alliance forces were able to overrun the Taliban and al Qaeda defenses in three weeks with minimal casualties, the highly trained and superbly equipped American ground forces could have done at least as well.

Nor was it a question, as some warned, of sending ground forces into cave complexes where they would be decimated. The issue was: could we establish blocking positions along the lines of retreat from those cave complexes so as to prevent al Qaeda and Taliban fighters from escaping from the bombing, as they did at Tora Bora and, to a lesser extent, during Operation Anaconda? It is hardly likely that disorganized and dazed refugees running for their lives from precise bombing attacks could have done significant harm to protected American ground forces waiting for them in ambush.

As for the possibility of an Afghan resistance, that was a superficially more valid concern; after all, it is precisely what happened in the 1980's following the Soviet invasion. A more thoughtful look, however, reveals the utter inappropriateness of the analogy.

Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in late December 1979 on behalf of a Communist leader, Babrak Karmal. The Soviets had brought this leader back from abroad to take the place of another Communist leader, Hafizullah Amin, whose policies they did not like and whom they had therefore liquidated. The intervention itself followed a period of serious revolutionary disturbance against the local government, which in word and deed had made known its intention to root out Islam, to destroy existing landlord-tenant relationships throughout the country, and to alter the traditional status of Afghan women. In other words, the government the Soviets were supporting had, in effect, declared war on almost all of Afghan society with the exception of the tiny fraction of the population that agreed with it.

Nothing in this scenario paralleled what America was about to do in Afghanistan. We were intervening on behalf of a rebel movement that had exhausted its ability to continue fighting against a government generally known to be extremely and increasingly unpopular. We were committed to no ideology; on the contrary, in our public statements we stressed that we had no stake in how the Afghans organized themselves following the war, as long as they established a stable government that did not support terrorists—conditions that the overwhelming majority of Afghans of every ethnic-

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ity were perfectly willing to accept. Instead of the fictive government of Babrak Karmal, we would have been fighting with the support of Northern Alliance and southern Pashtun forces (like Hamid Karzai's group) that had already openly opposed the Taliban regime. To the extent that Americans had a reputation in Afghanistan prior to this operation, it was not as a previously aggressive neighbor but as an ally who had helped to defeat the Soviets in the first place. Finally, instead of entering the country with a conscript army demonstrating contempt for Afghans and committing wanton civilian atrocities, America's highly professional armed forces would have distinguished themselves for fair dealing and humanitarianism. The Soviet troops laid mines in fields and gave explosive toys to children. American troops hand out food and medical supplies.

Similarly specious was the argument that we could not have gotten ground forces to Afghanistan in time. Planning for operations against the Taliban began on September 13. Bombs began falling 24 days later. To judge from previous recent campaigns, it should have been possible to put a substantial portion of a Marine Expeditionary Force on the ground in Afghanistan within that amount of time. Such a force could then readily have established one or more airbases, either by seizing existing ones or by constructing hasty airstrips, to accommodate a subsequent influx of troops and equipment from the 101st Air Assault Division and its parent XVIII Airborne Corps. Considering that the major ground push did not, in fact, begin until sixteen days after the bombing began, or 40 days after the initial decision to start the operation, there is every reason to believe that we could have had soldiers in place in critical parts of the country to cut off al Qaeda escape routes.

Why, then, was this not done? I have already discussed the paralyzing grip on the imagination exercised by the capabilities of airpower. It is also true that, before any alternative plan could have been adopted, ground-force commanders themselves would have needed to break free of the traditional belief that military operations must not begin until all forces that may eventually be necessary are "set" in position. An Afghanistan operation would not have looked like that—forces would have entered the theater piecemeal and have been deployed in relatively small units, probably battalion-sized (1,000 to 1,500 men depending on the unit) or even smaller. Considering the weakness of the enemy we faced, and, yes, our unmatched control of the air, there was no real danger in such an operation; but the objections to it would have had to be overcome.

WE HAVE not failed in Afghanistan, but neither have we succeeded. By waiting to deploy ground forces until almost all of the major Taliban strongholds had fallen and until the political situation, as well as the prospect of catching and destroying al Qaeda refugees, was already slipping out of our grasp, we left ourselves a very hard row to hoe. The war against al Qaeda continues, in circumstances that render it extremely difficult for us to break the organization up, and it is far from certain that we will be able to establish a stable government that can, on its own, prevent the country from serving again as a terrorist training base.

This partial victory was an opportunity missed. Al Qaeda did not expect that we would actually attack Afghanistan or that, if we did, the results would be so devastating. They had concentrated a great deal of personnel and resources there, thereby giving us the best chance we would ever have to smash their organization definitively. Now we have to hunt them down all over the world while still maintaining a significant military presence in Afghanistan, even as we prepare for war with Iraq. In our present geopolitical environment, such partial victories are unacceptably costly.

There is reason to think that the Bush administration will avoid many of the same mistakes in the forthcoming conflict in Iraq. Ground forces in sufficient numbers will certainly exist there, and, after a period in which enthusiasts of the Afghan model have seemed to be winning the day in Washington, a more balanced approach may be prevailing. This suggests that we will be in an excellent position to ensure that we actually achieve all of our major objectives in Iraq: the elimination of Saddam Hussein, the complete accounting for and destruction of his programs to produce weapons of mass destruction, the reintegration of Iraq's terrorized minorities into the country, and the establishment of a peaceful and stable regime.

But there is also room for concern. The problem in Afghanistan was not simply that we failed to use ground forces. Rather, that decision was itself emblematic of a larger failure to recognize that the shape and nature of a military operation establishes for good or ill the preconditions for the peace to follow. It is possible, as we saw both in Afghanistan and in our earlier campaign against Iraq in 1991, to design military operations that are brilliantly successful from a strictly operational point of view but that do not achieve and may actually hamper the

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achievement of larger political goals. That is the trap we must now avoid.

The American military does not, by nature, see things this way. Consider, for one famous example, General Dwight D. Eisenhower's refusal to race for Berlin at the end of World War II, a refusal based on his feeling that such an operation would entail an unnecessary expenditure of American lives when the war had already been "won." In more recent times, fears of Vietnam-style "quagmires" and Somalia-style "mission creep" have further undermined the military's willingness to consider the political dimensions of conflict, and have driven an ever wider wedge between the larger goals we are pursuing and the military campaigns we design, nominally, to achieve them.

The enthusiasm for airpower, which has beguiled military and civilian thinkers alike, has exacerbated this trend. Airpower by itself can play only the smallest of roles in creating conditions on the ground advantageous for one or another political outcome. Airpower can blow things up; but in wars in which we aim to replace one regime with another, there is simply no substitute for being there, with boots on the ground, in support of a plan that has been thought all the way through. Otherwise, we run the risk of winning still more battles and losing the war.

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The Pakistani Time Bomb

Alex Alexiev

In late November of last year, a Pakistani Muslim cleric, eulogizing the murderer of two CIA employees in Virginia, elicited the enthusiastic and resounding assent of his audience by calling upon Allah to "destroy and completely annihilate America." Anti-American rants have become a daily ritual in the world of radical Islam, and this one could have been dismissed as so much hot air but for a singular fact: the cleric and his audience made up the newly elected parliament of Pakistan's key North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Indeed, an alliance of Islamist parties is now in power in NWFP, and, together with its coalition partner in the neighboring province of Baluchistan, it is dead serious about installing an Islamic order not only there but eventually in all of Pakistan. Already, the NWFP government has ordered traffic stopped during the five daily prayers, banned music and video from public transport, and permitted radical clerics to start destroying cable TV networks. It has also passed resolutions to forbid banks from charging interest, change the weekly holiday to Friday, and set up a committee for stricter enforcement of Islamic punishments, including the death penalty for blasphemy, stoning to death for adultery, and the cutting off of hands for theft. These and other promised "reforms," coupled with existing ordinances, threaten to transform the two provinces into a Taliban-like haven for Islamic extremism not much different from Mullah Omar's original across the border with Afghanistan.

Even more ominously, the victorious Islamic coalition shows every sign of flouting its early promises not to interfere in the anti-terror policies of the government of Pervez Musharraf. NWFP's chief minister has announced that his province will not allow any American-assisted activity against al Qaeda and Taliban elements on its territory, and has called for the expulsion of all American personnel from Pakistan as a whole. The parliamentary leader of the extremist coalition has also threatened to "disrupt and disable" the national government in case of a U.S. war with Iraq and promised "financial and physical" assistance to Baghdad. In a direct challenge to Islamabad, the provincial head of Baluchistan has ordered the release of imprisoned terrorists from five outlawed jihadist organizations.

Worst of all, it is becoming increasingly clear that the central government is either unwilling or unable to stand up to the zealots. The radicalization of Pakistan's society has been going on for two and a half decades, and despite much rhetoric to the contrary, Musharraf's half-hearted policies have clearly not succeeded in curtailing or even slowing down the process. Nor has he been helped by his quest for a modicum of democratic legitimacy by scheduling elections last October. Paradoxically, it

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was the Islamist parties—obscurantist, intolerant, and misogynist to the core, and openly preaching violence and hate—that were the real winners of Musharraf's sop to democracy. United in a political coalition for the first time, they polled more than twice as many votes than ever before, vaulting into power in NWFP and Baluchistan and emerging as the nation's third largest political party.

If this state of affairs is allowed to continue, the U.S. war on terror in a crucial theater could suffer a crushing blow. To understand how it has come to pass is to understand what makes extremism and terror thrive in Pakistan—and far beyond.

In 1947, when Pakistan came into being as a result of India's partition, few would have voted it most likely to succeed as a hotbed of Islamic extremism. Its founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was an urbane, secular man whose vision for the country he almost single-handedly created was of a democratic, tolerant, secular nation. Most Muslims in the new country were also anything but Islamic fundamentalists. The vast majority of the Sunni Muslims who made up some 80 percent of the population belonged to the syncretic Barelvi school of Islam; Pakistan's Shiites were likewise moderate, influenced by Hindu traditions. It was only among the 10 percent of Sunnis who practiced the Deobandi creed and were concentrated in the Pashtun areas that one could find fundamentalist attitudes. *

Thus, for the first 25 years of Pakistan's existence, religious extremism was rare, sectarian strife was limited, and the two religious parties that predated partition—Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) and Jamiat-i-Islami (JI)—played, at best, a marginal political role.

Ironically, their fortunes took a turn for the better during the tenure of the secular socialist Zulkfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977). Seeking to create a sense of national identity in the aftermath of the civil war between East and West Pakistan, Bhutto promulgated a new state constitution in which the religious parties for the first time were allowed to play a key role. The new constitution declared Islam to be the state religion and endorsed a variety of measures for the progressive Islamization of Pakistani society, complete with a watchdog institution, the Council of Islamic Ideology, to oversee the process. In nationalizing education, Bhutto also carved out an exception, allowing the Islamic boarding schools—*madrassas*—to remain free of state control. In another move that was to have lasting repercussions, Bhutto established close relations with Saudi Arabia.

With the coming to power of the military dictator Zia ul Haq, who overthrew Bhutto in 1977, the process of Islamization only accelerated. Using Islam to legitimate his own rule and suppress his political opponents, Zia expanded the role of radical Muslim clerics by allowing them to collect and distribute Islamic donations, such as the *zakat* and *usher* tithes, thus greatly enhancing their political clout. He also began to enforce *shari'a* justice, introducing such gruesome spectacles as public hangings, "amputations" of limbs, and whippings. An amended blasphemy law imposed the death penalty for any real or imagined insult to the prophet Muhammad.

Islamization received still further impetus in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The powerful Inter-Services Intelligence organization (ISI), controlled by the Pakistani army, worked closely with the country's Islamic parties to train and assist the Afghan *mujahideen*, providing them with the lion's share of American-supplied equipment. During this same period, the government tacitly sanctioned, and perhaps organized, paramilitary units that had been set up by the religious parties but that were soon transformed into terrorist organizations. All of these groups operated in Afghanistan (and later in Kashmir), actively supporting the insurgent Taliban and al Qaeda. They also frequently fomented violence and intimidation at home, committing hundreds of murders of innocent Shiites and Barelvis. By the time Zia's tenure ended in a plane crash in 1988, Islamic extremists had become a virtual state within the state, lavishly funded and protected by the military.

In the ten-year period of democracy that followed under Benazir Bhutto and then Nawaz Sharif, some policies changed. But one thing that did not change was the willingness of the rulers to curry favor with the extremists. Thus, Mrs. Bhutto legitimized the fanatics of the JUI by bringing them into her government as a coalition partner and by appointing their firebrand leader, Fazlur Rahman, as chairman of a parliamentary committee. It was also her government that, in close collaboration with the JUI and the Deobandi mullahs, put the Taliban in power in Afghanistan and thus set in motion the events leading to 9/11. Nawaz Sharif, in turn, appointed a prominent Islamic zealot as director general of the ISI, and contributed in no small measure to the growing infiltration of ex-

* Recent studies of contemporary Pakistan include Mary Ann Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan* (2002) and Owen Bennet Jones, *Pakistan: The Eye of the Storm* (2002). See also David Warren's essay in last month's Commentary, "Lahore; or, the Islamic Gale."

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tremist elements into the Pakistani military. As the "democratic" period came to an end in 1999 with the overthrow of the Sharif government by General Musharraf, its only lasting legacy seemed to be the further entrenchment of Islamic fanaticism in Pakistani society.

NO OTHER area of Pakistani society has been penetrated by radical Islam to a greater extent than the educational system. In a brief quarter-century, Islamists have been able to build a huge network of religious seminaries in every region of the country. They now churn out hundreds of thousands of fanatics year in and year out. Fairly rare at the time of partition, these schools began to increase in number under Bhutto, but it was Zia who allowed them to build wherever they pleased, who began recruiting their graduates into government service, and who, in 1980, upgraded their certificates to the level of an MA degree in Arabic or Islamic sciences. Zia's tenure also marked the beginning of the spread of Islamism into the government-run and nominally secular school system.

The Deobandis (after a north Indian town where the doctrine originated) practice a fundamentalist creed marked by obscurantism, hatred of Western civilization and of Jews, misogyny, and violent dislike of Shiite Muslims. Their seminary curriculum contains little but indoctrination in their radical philosophy. Not surprisingly, students often graduate functionally illiterate, with virtually no job skills, but thoroughly prepared for a career in extremism and jihad. A third of the seminaries also provide military training, supplying the vast majority of recruits for Pakistani terrorist organizations. Since approximately 15 percent of the students come from foreign countries, virtually all Islamic terrorist groups around the world have benefited from this "educational" system.

While no official nation-wide study of these *madrassas* exists, estimates of their overall number range between 10,000 and 20,000; unregistered seminaries may add another 10,000 to the total. As for the number of students, here the estimate ranges from a conservative half-million to over 2 million. (By comparison, some 1.9 million Pakistani children reportedly attended primary schools in 2002.)

Clearly, despite their extremist bent, the *madrassas* are highly popular. The reason for this is very simple, having less to do with public sympathy for Deobandi doctrine than with the fact that the schools are free of charge, covering not only tuition but room and board and even providing pocket money. In a country that spends only $8 per capita on education, and where the government is unable to offer even the most basic education to its masses of poor—60 percent of Pakistan's children are now denied a chance to enroll in primary school, and in literacy Pakistan occupies a place at the very bottom of the list of developing countries—the alternative to a *madrassa* education for many destitute parents is no education at all, plus an extra mouth to feed.

Running this huge network is not cheap. A recent study by a Peshawar think tank gauges that the cost of food alone in schools in the North West Frontier Province is something like $129 million per year, while total running costs for the *madrassas* in Pakistan are said by another source to be significantly higher than the "federal government's budgetary allocation for education, health, family planning, etc." The sum total is almost certainly well in excess of $1 billion a year.

Needless to say, the clerics themselves refuse to divulge the sources (or the magnitude) of the funding they receive, and, since the *madrassas* are exempt from normal auditing procedures, the government has no means of obtaining such information. Domestically, the schools have access to a variety of sources, including religious endowments, *zakat* funds transferred by the government, income from real estate, and direct fundraising on the street. But however substantial these sums may be, they seldom exceed 25 percent of the total needed; thus, three-quarters of *madrassa* funding comes from abroad.

Here the sources include diaspora communities, revenues from offshore businesses, and donations from wealthy individuals, as well as tuition fees collected from some foreign students. But the one major source, and the only one with both the willingness and the wherewithal to provide truly large amounts of money, is Saudi Arabia. In the end, in education as in every other relevant area, it is impossible to understand the exponential growth of hard-line Islamic attitudes and organizations in Pakistan without reference to the Saudis.

THE EXTREME puritanical version of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia—known generally as Wahhabism (though the term is one the Saudis and their acolytes consider derogatory and never use)—has historically been very close to the Deobandi creed. But it was not until the late 1970's that this affinity led to a partnership to spread militant Islam in the subcontinent. The Islamization of Pakistan under Zia coincided nicely with the

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emergence of Saudi Arabia both as the globe's most important oil exporter and as the key sponsor of fundamentalism in the Muslim world and beyond.

Starting in the 1980's, the four largest Wahhabi front organizations—the World Muslim League (WML), the Al Haramain Foundation, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO)—became the main sponsors of Deobandi seminaries and jihadist organizations in Pakistan, as well as of the most extreme of the Afghan resistance groups and later of the Taliban and al Qaeda. The WML alone is said to have provided more than $200 million for various projects. How the funds are actually transferred is not known, but according to Pakistan's finance minister, the informal and untraceable *hindi* system (known as *hawala* in Arab countries) brings some $4 billion into Pakistan every year, a sum considerably higher than all formal bank transfers put together.

While neither the donors nor the recipients of this aid are in the habit of talking, occasional bits of information in the Saudi press hint at the magnitude of the effort. In December 2000, the Saudi government paper *Ain-Al-Yaqeen* reported that over the previous year, the Al Haramain Foundation had "founded 1,100 mosques, schools, and Islamic centers" in Pakistan and elsewhere, printed 13 million Islamic books, and employed 3,000 callers (proselytizers). Over the same period, IIRO had completed the construction of 3,800 mosques, spent $45 million on Islamic education, and employed 6,000 teachers and proselytizers, while WAMY, for its part, provided $26 million in "aid to students and founding mosques." Nor have these activities declined after 9/11, despite the fact that all four Saudi fronts have been directly implicated by U.S. authorities in terrorist activities.*

Still another aspect of Saudi influence is the emergence and rapid growth of openly Wahhabi groups in Pakistan. The relevant date here is 1986, when a Saudi-trained cleric revived a largely forgotten organization of Indian origin called Jamiat Ahle Hadith. Since then, with generous support from the Al Haramain Foundation, Jamiat Ahle Hadith has emerged as a major factor on the Pakistani scene with some seventeen subsidiary organizations, a violent youth wing, and three jihadist groups affiliated with al Qaeda and implicated in terrorist activities in Pakistan and Kashmir. Jamiat Ahle Hadith also conducts an active program of building Wahhabi *madrassas*, whose numbers are currently growing faster than those of any other group in Pakistan.

Saudi funding is also behind the transformation of the Tablighi Jamaat organization from an association of peaceful proselytizers into world-wide jihad recruiters. Tablighi's annual Muslim revival meetings at Raiwind, near Lahore, attract up to two million people and have become the second largest Islamic gathering in the world after the Mecca pilgrimage.

Finally, the Wahhabi/Deobandi symbiosis extends beyond Pakistan. With the help of Saudi money, Deobandi and Jamiat Ahle Hadith fanatics have increasingly taken over the mosques of Great Britain's 750,000 Pakistani Muslims and steered them in an extremist direction. As a result, the United Kingdom has become a major source of funding for terrorist Pakistani groups; two such groups, Lashkar-e-Tayba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, reportedly collect $7.5 million in mosque donations each year despite the fact that they are banned in both Great Britain and Pakistan.

Similarly, in the United States, Saudi/Wahhabi domination of the Muslim establishment means that many ordinary donors end up subsidizing extremism without necessarily knowing it. For example, the innocent-sounding Pakistani Educational Development Foundation (PEDF), registered as a non-profit in Michigan, collects funds among Pakistani professionals in the United States for the ostensible purpose of providing educational opportunities for poor Pakistani children. In fact, these donations invariably end up subsidizing extremist *madrassas* under Wahhabi auspices.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan faced the stark choice of siding with or against the United States in the looming war on terrorism. Pervez Musharraf made the logical choice. In a striking about-face, he switched his country's stance from tacit support of terrorism to an alliance with Washington—in return for a sizable aid package, debt forgiveness, lifting of trade restrictions, and, most importantly, a change in Pakistan's status from a pariah state to a member in good standing of the international community. Occasional violence by Islamic extremists notwithstanding, this radical change occurred without significant popular opposition.

This was hardly surprising. Most Pakistanis are clearly aware that their society has deteriorated

* It is worth stressing that, contrary to Saudi propaganda and Western reporting, these foundations are not "private and charitable" but invariably state-controlled and -financed. Indeed, a royal Saudi decree dating back to 1994 bans the collection of funds for charitable purposes without government permission, and every request for aid from Muslim groups or institutions must be approved by the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs.

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radically ever since the onset of Islamization. Indeed, arresting this decline was the reason Musharraf gave for his 1999 overthrow of the civilian government. And although it would be unfair to blame *all* of Pakistan's problems on the religious extremists, there can be no doubt that a strong correlation exists between the growing obscurantism, intolerance, and sectarian violence and the fact that Pakistan regularly places at the very bottom of the United Nations Index of Human Development.

As part of his deal with Washington, Musharraf obligated himself to deny the use of Pakistan as a base of terrorist operations and to control activities encouraging the growth of Islamic fanaticism. While there have been some successes on this score (notably in connection with the police probe into the January 2002 killing of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl), they have been limited to the capture and transfer into U.S. custody of several hundred terrorist suspects, including important al Qaeda officials. But the vast majority of these—nine out of ten, according to one source—have been non-Pakistani; domestic terrorists have yet to be confronted.

Early on, pressured by the U.S., the government did ban a number of jihadist groups. But they promptly reconstituted themselves under different names, in at least some cases before they were even outlawed—suggesting that they had been tipped off. (Similarly suspicious is the fact that only token amounts of money were left in many of the 50 terrorist accounts frozen in early 2002.) Nor was a serious effort undertaken to move against the leadership of the extremist establishment: a number of the most strident leaders were placed under comfortable house arrest, only to be released three months later without any charges filed. Many of them are now prominent members of the political establishment.

Finally, little progress has been made in reforming *madrassa* education, touted as one of Musharraf's priorities even before 9/11. It has long been recognized that any true reform would have to modernize the curriculum, provide for financial accountability, and subject the seminaries to mandatory registration and some regulation. Predictably, the clerics are violently opposed to all of these measures. That the government is not willing to take them on is apparent from Musharraf's proposed reform ordinance, issued in June 2002, which made the measures voluntary.

"Jihad Inc. Back in Business" is the way one Pakistani headline has aptly summarized the resulting situation. The initial shock of the post-September 11 crackdown has worn away, and Islamic extremism in this nuclear-armed country is today once again on the offensive.

WHAT IS to be learned from this bleak survey? First, the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan was neither inevitable nor the result of a revolutionary upheaval. A radical fundamentalist fringe did exist in Pakistan, as it has throughout the Muslim world since the Kharijite movement in the 7th century; but it remained on the margins until self-serving military dictators and corrupt politicians promoted it for their own purposes. All of them ultimately failed as leaders, but in the process they endowed extremism with the kind of legitimacy and power it was unlikely ever to achieve on its own.

The most cursory look shows a similar or identical process taking place in virtually every country where Islamic militancy is on the rise. Thus, in Bangladesh, the military dictator Zia ur Rahman courted Islamists as allies in his battle with the secularists in the mid-1970's. His successor, another military dictator, continued along the same road by co-opting and legitimating the extremist Jamaat-e-Islami party and declaring Islam the state religion in 1988. After a brief interruption, the Islamization project was reinstated in 2001 by the current government, in which Jamaat extremists participate as a coalition partner for the first time. Jihadist groups are now active throughout Bangladesh, attacks against prominent secular figures and the Hindu minority are the order of the day, and a fanatic cleric regularly calls for the destruction of the United States from the national mosque in Dhaka.

Indonesia, a country whose people practice a very moderate form of Islam, is not yet so acutely threatened, but the coddling of extremists and terrorists is plain to see. The former president, Abdurrahman Wahid, had a tacit agreement with the Laskar Jihad terrorists to ignore their murderous anti-Christian campaign in the Molluca Islands in return for political neutrality in the crisis that eventually toppled him. More recently, vice president Hamzah Haz, a prominent Muslim leader, vigorously denied the existence of terrorist organizations in Indonesia despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. It is well known that, in the face of numerous warnings, Jakarta refused to act until the bombing in Bali last October. Even more incongruously, Haz kept on defending known terrorist kingpins even *after* the Bali massacre.

In Nigeria, President Obosanjo, a Christian, looked the other way as Islamic zealots imposed *shari'a* law in a dozen provinces, thus threatening to rend asunder the precarious political balance of a

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country evenly split between Muslims and Christians. In once-prosperous Lebanon, Syria-sponsored terrorist groups, not welcome in Damascus, have been allowed to transform the country into a ticking time bomb. And so forth.

The lesson is plain. Whenever and wherever political leaders have tried to exploit or appease extremism, the latter has invariably emerged stronger and more intransigent. Conversely, in Muslim states where governments and politicians refuse to play games with the radical Islamists, the latter have difficulty making headway, despite prolonged campaigns of terror and assassination. This has been the case not only in places where terrorism has been ruthlessly suppressed, as in Egypt, Algeria, and most of Central Asia, but also in countries with relatively mild regimes, including Morocco, Tunisia, Malaysia, Jordan, Turkey, and Albania.

Pakistan's experience also shows that, in addition to acquiring political legitimacy and government protection, radical Islam needs to penetrate key parts of society, especially the education system, in order to ensure its staying power. Indoctrination of youth is a major objective, guaranteeing a supply of cadres for the streets, for political intimidation, and for jihadist causes both foreign and domestic. For many of the semi-literate clerics who are in charge of the schools, this is also a very profitable line of work, a fact that partly explains their determined resistance to any efforts to control and regulate their activities.

Not surprisingly, Islamic seminaries have sprouted like mushrooms wherever extremism has sunk roots in the past decade. There are at least 10,000 Deobandi schools in Bangladesh, and an equal if not larger number in India. None of them is supervised or even registered by the state, and nobody knows for sure the number of their students.

In India, an increasing number of *madrassas* are being taken over by the even more extreme Jamiat Ahle Hadith and Tablighi Jamaat groups, which does not bode well for the world's largest democracy. In Indonesia, likewise, Islamic boarding schools, called *pesantren*, number in the thousands. In the aftermath of the Bali bombing, it was revealed that at least some of them have provided assistance in terrorist operations and offered sanctuary to terrorists on the run. Even in relatively peaceful Malaysia, inspections conducted after 9/11 showed the spread, unbeknownst to the government, of *madrassa*-type schools.

Nor is Islamist indoctrination limited to Muslim countries. Over the past decade, numerous fundamentalist schools, sponsored more often than not by Saudi Arabia and operating in conjunction with Wahhabi mosques, have appeared in such non-Muslim areas of the world as Russia, the Balkans, Western Europe, and North America. North America also hosts at least a dozen Deobandi seminaries.

Still another lesson is that Muslim extremism costs money—lots of it. While cutting the flow of funds has been a priority of the war on terror from the beginning, this has usually meant an effort to interrupt those financial streams directed specifically at terrorist operations. This is indeed essential; nevertheless, such funds are only a minuscule part of what sustains the vast worldwide infrastructure of Islamic extremism, without which the terrorist component would shrivel. In Pakistan, as we have seen, the maintenance of the indoctrination network alone costs $1 billion a year, not including the sums necessary to keep the numerous jihadist groups going.

Foreign financing plays a vital role in extremist activities in Pakistan and elsewhere, and foreign financing essentially means Saudi Arabia, the only country with both the ideological incentive and the financial ability to spend between $3 and $4 billion a year to support radical Islamic activities. While Saudi funding of al Qaeda has increasingly come into public focus, the Pakistani experience documents a less well-understood but no less crucial aspect of Riyadh's involvement: the fact that for more than twenty years, the House of Saud has been the primary financial enabler of Islamic extremism around the world.

What has this money—$70 billion by the end of 2002, according to the Saudis' own admission—accomplished? For starters, it has made their militant and aggressively expansionist brand of Islam the main idiom of much of the Islamic establishment, and its doctrine the prototype ideology of virtually all jihadist movements, including those that violently dislike the House of Saud. Wahhabi money has bought and co-opted much of the Islamic scholarly establishment; even venerable institutions like Cairo's Al-Azhar University now spew extremist propaganda. In the West, fat Saudi endowments have placed paid apologists of extremism in charge of Islamic-studies departments at renowned universities, including Harvard, the University of California, the University of London, and many others.

Islamic publishing has also been co-opted: four out of five publishing houses in the Muslim world today toe the Wahhabi line, while a gigantic printing center in Medina churns out reams of free ex-

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tremist propaganda in many languages. Huge Islamic centers built and maintained by the Saudis in the world's greatest cities are currently in the business of spreading intolerance, as are many thousands of new mosques run by imams under Wahhabi auspices. Alongside hundreds of Saudi front organizations and charities, these institutions have become part of an enormous international network that has become the main incubator and sustaining habitat of terrorism.

WHERE DOES this leave us? From the point of view of the war on terrorism, tolerating allies who refuse to face down domestic extremists is both costly and counterproductive, and renders us less rather than more secure. The same goes for tolerating schools of hate. Indoctrinating children to believe that murdering innocent people is justified is not a matter of religion; it is criminal sedition, and governments permitting it, including our own, must treat it as such.

In the end, if we are to succeed in the war on terror, we must be able to disrupt and dismantle the entire edifice of extremism. Al Qaeda, murderous as it is, is but a symptom of a greater malignancy, and even a total victory over that organization will not cure the underlying disease. For that we need to cut off its blood supply, which in the first instance means confronting and ending Saudi sponsorship of extremism. Washington's failure even to acknowledge this problem is the greatest failure of our anti-terror campaign to date, one that not even the removal of Saddam Hussein will repair. No lasting progress in the war on terrorism can be expected unless and until we deny the fanatics their lifeline.

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Judaism Beyond Words: Part 4

David Gelernter

Introduction

Following is the fourth in a series of essays on the "theme-images" of Judaism; there will be a summarizing and concluding article to come.

By "theme-image" I mean a theme that is not an idea or phrase but is rather essentially visual—as in music the themes are musical, in painting (mainly) pictorial; in literature, they might be ideas, words, or images. Unfortunately we have no useful theory of theme-images, not even a good, clear way of talking about them. But Judaism is a natural field for theme-images, because Jewish thought has so often been *visual* thought.

The Bible has contributed many phrases to civilization, and (of course) many ideas—and many images too, from the burning bush and the crossing of the split-open sea to Samson bringing the house down and Ezekiel's valley of dry bones.

Consider the meticulous visual detail with which the Bible, in the book of Exodus, describes the tabernacle in the desert. Even the manifest of raw materials is visually dazzling:

> gold and silver and bronze; and ultramarine, and purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and goat's hair; and ram's hides dyed earth-red, tanned leather and acacia wood. Oil for lamplight; spices for anointing oil and for fragrant smoking incense. Onyx, stones for setting—for the ephod and the breastplate. [25:3-7]

The construction details that follow are complete enough to have made possible the building of elaborate 20th-century models.

The first three theme-images in my series have been (1) separation—for example at the Red Sea; (2) the veil (suggesting a bridal veil) between God and man—in the form, for example, of the *tallit* with which the rabbis say Moses wrapped himself when he encountered God on Sinai; (3) relentless turning-inward—the "mental sculpture" of a never-to-be-completed motion, symbolized by the actions of ascending a stairway, drawing aside a curtain, and opening a door that put us face to face with the Torah scrolls in the holy ark. Here I describe a fourth: the energy field between maleness and femaleness that affects every inner compass of mankind.

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Kol Kallah: The Bride's Voice

WE TURN from the intellectual to the sensual side of Judaism when we turn to the cult at its core. "Cult" has a pagan ring, but need not. It might suggest the sacrificial cult of the ancient Temple, but that is not what I have in mind—and not the ritual of the synagogue, either. I mean religious ceremony centering as much on acts as on words, in an environment separated (at least temporarily) from daily life. Ritual purity plays a part, sacred food and drink can play a part. There is always a certain poetic density, and a sense in which the main actor is transformed symbolically into something more than human. The Friday-evening ceremony welcoming the Sabbath at home is such a cultic event, on which I will focus.

In any religious system, the cult is the sensual component. In Judaism, the "sensual" is underlined. But are we out of bounds in even mentioning Judaism's sensual side? No: Judaism encompasses reality and averts its eyes from nothing. Judaism encourages a heightened sensitivity (the way some people are always aware of the sun, wind, clouds, taste of the air) not to nature but to man, and to the sensual aspect of human nature in particular.

Consider: on the agenda for contemplation by the rabbis who wrote the Talmud—one ancient love poem, with male and female parts alternating. Not just any love poem, but an explosively ecstatic, overflowing song in which the vividness and occasionally stumbling-forward awkwardness of the imagery create an air of breathless hurry, the power of speaking left far behind by the power of wanting—a striking erotic effect. The question before the rabbis: should this book be included in the sacred canon of the Hebrew Bible? By the way, it never once mentions God.

Rabbi Akiba is the greatest figure in the Talmud. Here was his opinion on the poem: God forbid, he says, *has v'shalom*, that anyone question its sanctity. Given his authority, his view decided the question, and you can open any Bible today and read this masterpiece of erotic folk-poetry, the Song of Songs. (Christian Bibles call it, prosaically, the Song of Solomon.)

Rabbi Akiba in common with other ancient and medieval rabbis interpreted the Song of Songs as a duet between God-the-lover and Israel-the-beloved. But he said something else that is even more striking than his unequivocal endorsement of the Song's sanctity; it may be the most startling comment in the Talmud about any biblical book. He said that the Song of Songs is *the* holiest book of the Bible:

> The whole world put together is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. For all the scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.

We cannot understand Judaism unless we understand how these words echo through it. This is what Judaism's heightened awareness is about: a sharp sensitivity to the male and female aspects of everything in the universe. Jewish thought is steeped not in sex but in sexuality: in maleness, femaleness, and the power between them—the universal human gravitation. The Bible speaks with extraordinary depth and truth on the topic. Then the rabbis, building on explicit hints in the Bible, color the whole spiritual cosmos in male and female shades.

Obsession with sexuality: the literature and thought of the last century are stamped with it, thanks in no small part to the obsessions of many secular Jewish writers and thinkers. And it is not incongruous with Judaism. But it is out of balance; it shows how things can come unglued when we banish cult and sanctity. On the other hand, the heart's desire of many contemporary thinkers *is* un-Jewish: that marriage should (in effect) be deconsecrated and collapse into the background noise, just one more "arrangement" among many; that manliness disappear except as a template for girls, and womanliness for boys; that the two sexes become interchangeable and then melt together, thereby discharging the battery that operates civilization, wiring its two poles together, shorting humanity out. These ideas are profoundly un-Jewish, not to say inhuman.

And the cult at the core of Judaism? It is dedicated to the God of Israel, but it is in fact a *cult of family*, and specifically of the married couple. It is a proper cult, with sacred ceremonies, laws of ritual purity, songs, texts; even, in a special sense, a hereditary priesthood. And it has its own particular sacred occasions. As Passover is the center of the cult of the family in general (not Passover's *only* role, of course), the cult of the couple centers on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, the married couple is exalted as God's culminating masterpiece. God's presence flares up between them. The main actress is (poetically) transformed.

The cult of the couple and of family has shaped

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Judaism and Jewish life for two millennia at least. It is built on human reality: not on the ideal permanence of marriage but on the reality of "prenuptial agreements" and divorce. Nonetheless, it has given the Jewish family a unique stability and centrality; given the "priesthood" a unique status; given marriage a supreme importance wholly unlike its position in any other of the great monotheistic religions fathered by Judaism. It fostered no mere respect or reverence for marriage, far from it. It rather reshaped, refashioned, bent and twisted the whole spiritual universe around the married couple—molten glass reshaped by the glassmaker, spacetime bent and twisted by the gravity of a giant star.

Thus, a fourth theme-image: the force-field between maleness and femaleness that creates marriage and is so powerful it bowls the cosmos over. The "sacred woman" in Judaism is never the virgin, always the bride; and the bride's voice permeates Israel.

We start with the Bible. Its writing on relations between male and female is a supreme achievement of realism. But you must be tuned to the biblical frequency or it will all pass you by.

One aspect of the Bible's realism is unvarnished grim truth. Sarah, unable to conceive, tells her husband Abraham to sleep with her maid. He does. The girl gets pregnant and lords it over Sarah, who blames Abraham. Sarah is mad at her husband, at the maid, and (no doubt) at herself. She lashes out at Abraham: "The Lord judge between me and you!" In his short reply—"Look, the maid is in your hands; do what you want with her" (we can picture him turning and walking away)—we hear repugnance, guilt, and a husband's tendency to wash his hands (almost literally what he says) of sexual consequences.

More grim truth: Michal, daughter of King Saul and wife to his successor David, speaks to her husband after he has "danced before the Lord with all his might." She is near-jubilant with superior disdain: "The king of Israel has really covered himself with glory today!" He hits back in the way that will hurt her most: "Before the Lord, who chose *me* over your father, . . . I will be even grosser than that—with the handmaids!" Later, David's son Amnon, lusting for his half-sister Tamar, overpowers and rapes her. Then he despises her: "for the hate with which he hated her was greater even than the love with which he had loved her." Which has a tragic ring of truth.

But sexual reality in the Bible is not all bleak. There is sex appeal, for instance. David: "ruddy, with beautiful eyes and good looks" (1 Samuel 16:12). Absalom: "In all Israel there was none to be praised so much for his beauty; from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2 Samuel 14:25). Rachel: "beautiful figure, beautiful appearance" (Genesis 29:17). David admires the unclothed Batsheva (the "Bathsheba" of the authorized English version is just too ugly-sounding to accept): "From up on the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was good-looking; very" (2 Samuel 11:2). The king's palace in Jerusalem was atop a hill, with the town sloping away. No doubt she was gracefully crouching or seated or on her knees behind the parapet, as she languidly poured water ("languid" is Batsheva's middle name) over her moonlit body—and pondered the king on high, watching her with those "beautiful eyes"?

That scene has a kind of echo in a rabbinic comment on a verse in the book of Esther. Seven days into a noisy royal party in the Persian capital, the king, his heart "merry with wine," commands his courtiers "to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on" (Esther 1:10-12). But she refuses to come. The rabbis explain: when the king ordered her to appear wearing the crown royal, he meant *only* the crown royal.

At times the Bible is explicit, for example in the Song of Songs: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled" (5:2). The Song's most famous verses may be these (8:6):

> Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

But equally significant are passages where the sex is implicit: "Avimelech king of the Philistines looked out his window and saw: there was Isaac playing with [or laughing with or teasing or flirting with] Rebecca his wife" (Genesis 26:8; the verb is a pun on the name Isaac, which uses the same consonants as "playing with").

Romantic ardor: Jacob labors seven years to win Rachel, but "they seemed like just a few days to him in his love for her." (And then he has to work seven years more.)

A sustained, flirtatious come-on: the first encounter between beautiful Abigail and David. Abigail's rural-powerbroker husband had been rude to David's men, and she intercedes. We might disregard as mere standard protocol her "falling on her face before David," "bowing to the ground," falling

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at his feet." "Upon me *myself*, my lord, be the offense," she says—"may your servant girl whisper to you?—would you hear the words of your servant girl?" "Please forgive your servant girl's transgression."

Servant girl, servant girl, servant girl—which might also be translated "slave girl" (even better!): mere standard protocol for oriental kings. Except, David at this point is king of nothing; he is the outlaw head of a ragged criminal band on the run. Naturally he falls for it. He eats it up. "The Lord be blessed!" he says. "And blessed be your good sense, and blessed be *you*!" (1 Samuel 25:23-33). Ten days later, Abigail's husband happens to die. "The Lord smote him," reports the Bible, maintaining the usual straight face. "Blessed be the Lord!" says David, and invites her to be his, and she accepts enthusiastically.

And sometimes the text upends our expectations. In antiquity, only friendships between men are interesting. But the most famous friendship in the Bible, edging out even David and Jonathan's, is Ruth and Naomi's. ("Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God.") Or: a woman in biblical times was valued first and foremost as a maker of babies.* But when Hannah is bitter at her childlessness, her husband comforts her: "Why should you cry, and why should you not eat, and why should your heart grieve? Am I not better to you than *ten* sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8).

TEASING, BANTERING, and romance seem like small things. But in fact teasing (Isaac and Rebecca), bantering (Abigail and David), romance (Jacob and Rachel) are huge. Along with tenderness (Hannah and her husband), they are the things that turn sex from an animal proposition to a human one. Because it accomplishes the extraordinary feat of humanizing sex, the Bible makes it possible to harness sexual electricity to the cult of family.

The whole structure of the biblical family, as of all Western families until modern times, put the wife in the husband's power. He acquired her, and brought her home. In Hebrew as in many other languages, the feminine form of man (*iysh*) means woman (*ishah*). *Ishah* is presumably derived from *iysh*, as "woman" is presumably derived from "man." And the story of Adam and Eve—Adam created first, then Eve "built" from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:22)—seems like a physical embodiment of this linguistic relationship, language made flesh. (There is far less distance between words and things in the Bible than in modern language. "Word" and "thing" translate to the same Hebrew word—or thing.) Just as the word "woman" is derived from the word "man," the actual woman is "derived" from the actual man. "She shall be called woman," Adam says, "because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23).

But here is the very next verse: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife." We are accustomed to it, but the first hearers must have been stunned. (So far not a word about procreation.) And consider God's reason for creating Eve in the first place. The Lord says: "It is no good man's being alone" (Genesis 2:18)—five words in Hebrew, arguably the most perfect sentence ever composed. The prophet Hosea, referring to the Lord Himself as Israel's husband, sets out the biblical ideal for marriage: a husband will no longer be his wife's lord and master but rather *her man*, as she is *his woman*. "On that day it will come about, proclaims the Lord, that you will call Me 'my man' [or 'husband'] and no longer call Me 'my lord' [or 'master']" (2:18). What could the ancient world have made of that?

As recently as the first half of the 20th century, Americans (albeit wryly or snidely) used that phrase, "my lord and master," to mean "my husband." And they could dimly remember, or at least thought they could, a society where "lord and master" was not invariably a joke. So there is an implicit warning in Hosea's words: Jewish thought is profoundly out of synch with the rest of the world, sometimes by around 2,500 years. Throughout modern history, Jews, Christians, and atheists have tended to ignore or downplay this fact. But if we try to apply to Judaism the conventional social categories—"patriarchal," "matriarchal," "feminist," "anti-feminist"—we are guaranteed to go wrong.

THE REDEFINITION of man that puts sexuality at the center of the universe is an outgrowth of the woman-admiration that is typical—although not universal!—among the rabbis of the Talmud. (The Bible is almost never sentimental, but the rabbis sometimes are.) The cult of the married couple begins in the Talmud, based on explicit hints in the Bible; that the Sabbath is its feast day is a talmudic idea, too, one that gains definition over the centuries and bursts into bloom in medieval and post-medieval mysticism.

* The marriage ceremony of classical Athens: "I give this woman for the procreation of legitimate children," says the bride's proud father. "I accept," the bridegroom responds. The bride's father proclaims the amount of the dowry. "I am content," says the husband. They go home.

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"Every man who has no wife," says the Talmud, "lives without joy, without blessing, without goodness." The Midrash ups the ante. A man with no wife "lives without goodness, without help, without joy, without blessing, without God's forgiveness." Biblical verses are adduced to support each of these claims. Rabbi Shimon adds: "Indeed without peace," and gives a prooftext from the Bible. Rabbi Joshua adds, "Indeed without life," and gives another prooftext. Rabbi Hiyya adds, "Indeed such a man is not whole," and gives still another.

And, the Midrash continues, "some say that indeed such a man degrades the very archetype of God—for it is said, 'in the image of God He made man,' and what follows right after?" In the text of Genesis, that is? "'And you shall be fruitful and multiply.'" In other words: man cannot *be* "God's image" unless he is prepared to "be fruitful and multiply"—unless he is part of a couple; unless he has a wife.

But now, suddenly and dramatically, the topic has changed. From wife-praising the rabbis have turned to a different, basic question: *what is man*? They are preparing a surprising answer.

The Hebrew *adam* means "man," usually in the sense of "human being" rather than "male"; it is also the name Adam. But the Zohar adds a new meaning. Citing the verse, "Male and female He created them . . . and He called their name man" (Genesis 5:2), it asks, why "their" name and not "his" name? And it answers:

> Anywhere male and female are not found together, the Holy One Blessed be He does not place His abode there. Blessings are found nowhere but in a place where male and female are found, as it is said: "He blessed them and called their name Adam on the day they were created." It is not said, "He blessed him and called his name Adam," *for man is not so called except when male and female are one*. [emphasis added]

In Judaism, then, God is one but man is two—not male *or* female but male *and* female. Man and woman must come together not merely so that a child will be born but to create a whole man (a man in full, for real) out of two halves. Whether or not a child is engendered, the sexual union of husband and wife is inherently blessed.

Consider the implications of the Zohar's definition. In sexual union, human beings are not at their best or noblest, but only then are they *complete*. Man is not a creature at all but an event, flickering into existence for a few minutes here and there, a shimmer of flame. "If a man and his wife are worthy," says the Talmud, "the *shekhinah*," God's presence, "rests between them." Rashi (greatest of Talmud commentators) explains: male, *iysh*, is spelled *i-y-sh*; female, *ishah*, is spelled *i-sh-h*. "Male" has a *y* that female lacks. "Female" has an *h* that male lacks. Together, *y* and *h* spell God.

When the rabbis tell these stories about words and letters, they are not playing games. They are studying reality indirectly, the way you might study a photograph. As a photo is a two-dimensional image of reality, language in Judaism is reality's shadow, the image of a higher-dimensional world. And *biblical* language is the shadow of divine reality.

THE CULT of the married couple as conceived by the rabbis assumes that maleness and femaleness are perfectly *a*symmetric. Perfect asymmetry describes male and female as they relate to each other sexually. It describes (ideally) mother and father as they rear children. And it also describes male and female roles in making society.

Occasionally we find biblical women shining in fields that are ordinarily masculine: Deborah the military leader, Huldah the prophetess. Ezekiel angrily denounces bad female along with bad male prophets. Much later, long after the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C.E., Ezra numbers female as well as male singers among the host returning to Jerusalem and Judah from captivity in Babylon.

In the Bible's view of things, male and female are (furthermore) equally interested in sex. Ordinarily the male makes the advances, but not always: Abigail flirted with David before he flirted with her. In the Song of Songs, the girl's desires are just as sexually loaded as her lover's—and she has more lines.

But in general, the rabbis assume that men and women will behave and be treated differently. Their ideas of manliness and womanliness follow from that assumption.

The ideal man is a courageous aggressor for God and Israel, justice and holiness. Moses enters the biblical narrative by killing with one stroke an Egyptian who had been tormenting a Jew. It is no accident that the implement we associate with Moses is a big stick. When the Talmud says "in a place where there are no men, *you* strive to be a man!," we think of Moses, striving to transform Israel from rabble to nation.

The best-loved man in Israel's history is King David, who (as a puny teenager) screams bloodcurdling, near-hysterical defiance at Goliath. Facing battle he is transformed, is beside himself with lethal, clotted rage. He is a natural warrior, a fighter of unmatched prowess. Yet he is also remem-

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bered as the greatest poet in Hebrew, or perhaps in history. He is celebrated as the warrior-poet who worshiped the Lord with joy, dancing before the ark in Jerusalem. He never could control himself, and Israel condemned and loved him for that.

There are two versions of Judaism's ideal woman. In one version—in a sense, the official one—she is heroically brisk, efficient, and brilliant. This is the view we find in the biblical song, "Woman of Valor" or better, "Noble Woman," which concludes the book of Proverbs (31:10-31). Nowadays husband and family sing it to the woman of the house on Friday night, at the start of the Sabbath:

> She rises when it is still night; she gives food to her household, orders to her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it. With the fruit of her own labor she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with force, and makes her arms strong. . . . She is clothed in strength and beauty; she smiles at the future. . . .

But also:

> She reaches out to the poor, and extends her hand to the needy. . . . Her mouth is full of wisdom, and the teaching of loving-kindness is on her lips. . . . Her children rise to bless her, her husband to praise her: "Many daughters do nobly, but you outdo them all." . . . Acknowledge her accomplishments! Let her own deeds praise her at the gates.

If this biblical exhortation had been left alone, then "acknowledge her accomplishments!" would be merely that—a biblical exhortation. By singing the poem every Sabbath evening, husband and family *do* acknowledge her accomplishments: this is one element of the cult of the couple.

But the most beloved woman in Judaism is Jacob's wife Rachel, and she is beloved because of what Jeremiah says about her: "a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted, because they are not." Because of Rachel's intercession, say the rabbis, the Lord resolved to bring the Jews home from exile, home to Jerusalem.

Such brave, strong, male heroes as Abraham, Moses, and David argued with God. But Rachel did not argue, she demanded and got.

Jews do not venerate their heroes and heroines; they love and feel close to them. Throughout history, they have felt closer to Rachel than to anyone else except David, and Rachel's tomb outside Bethlehem ranks higher in Jewish minds than any other holy site except the Western Wall.

IDEAS ABOUT manliness and womanliness are related to, but not quite the same as, ideas about male and female—about sexual roles.

Ordinarily, Judaism puts males in charge of the public, outer world and females in charge of the private inner sanctum. Women may take on (nonetheless) as much as they want and can get in the outer world—as long as it is the secular world we are talking about. The religious world remains partitioned, like the Temple itself. Men are in charge of public religion; in private, at-home religion, women take precedence. And of these two, the inner, private domain is more important.

In ancient Israel, members of the priestly castes—Kohens and Levites—were born to minister in the Holy Temple, and they did their main duties within its precincts. The high priest's duties took him to the innermost precinct of all, the Holy of Holies. When the Temple was destroyed, the synagogue and the home jointly superseded it. But the home is more sacred than the synagogue. The Temple's outer precinct was symbolically transformed into the synagogue; the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, reemerged as the Jewish home.

Although the priestly castes still exist among Jews, and Kohens and Levites still perform certain rituals, women are the true priesthood of post-exilic Judaism. Both husband and wife, for example, are obligated to create light at home on Sabbath eve, but the woman's obligation is stronger, and she fulfills the commandment for the entire household. Even if her husband wants to light the Sabbath candles himself, the woman's claim comes first (according to the *Mishnah B'rurah*, the important commentary on Judaism's most authoritative compilation of religious law).

How do we know that the inner, home world is more important than the outer public world? The Mishnah tells us that Jewish men are, and Jewish women in general are not, obligated to perform positive, time-dependent commandments—for example to say certain prayers, a "positive" commandment, during the morning hours. (Negative commandments—"thou shalt not murder"—bind everyone all the time.) Home duties are more important than positive commandments; the conflict between them is resolved in favor of the home and against the commandments. (Some authorities excuse Torah students from the positive time-dependent commandments as well.)

Both a Kohen and a woman are born to be honored—and, in a ritual sense, restricted. (In Judaism the restrictions are always concrete, the rewards metaphysical.) Women (for example) cannot offi-

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ciate in synagogue; "female rabbi" and Jewish law are mutually exclusive. The same holds for female cantor, female Torah reader, and so on. In public worship, one person, the leader, performs the commandment of public prayer on behalf of many others—the congregation. But you cannot perform a commandment on someone else's behalf unless you are obligated to perform the commandment yourself; this is a basic principle of halakha. The women in the congregation may, but the men must, perform the religious acts associated with public prayer and Torah reading. So the (nonobligated) woman cannot fulfill the commandment on behalf of the (obligated) men—thus cannot lead, cannot officiate.

To the classical rabbis, these particular restrictions were merely consequences, not ends in themselves; and minor consequences—presiding, performing, and officiating have never meant much to Judaism. Far more important were rabbinic opinions that women should not be taught Talmud. In the modern Orthodox community, those opinions have been disregarded, embodying as they do no fundamental point of law, only prejudice. Today women are invited to study Talmud, or whatever they want. But the nonexistence of female rabbis in normative Judaism has unquestionably taken on (for some women) the force of tragedy. Judaism can sympathize, but cannot do anything about it; if you create woman rabbis you not only break the law, you break the poetry. And law and poetry are all there is.

AND SO we reach *erev Shabbat*, the evening of the Sabbath, where the cult of the married couple settles down and comes to rest.

The Sabbath exists in two ways: as a weekly observance, the central shaping event of Jewish life, and as a sacred text to be read—a living poem that is enacted and simultaneously interpreted. (Words are the shadows of things; things can be interpreted like words.) The way Jews "read" the Sabbath does not necessarily reflect the way they practice it. But they are commanded in the Torah both to "observe" and to "remember" the Sabbath—to act *and* think.

And so: why does the woman of the house and not the man light and bless the candles on Friday night? I have already given a halakhic reason but there are other, poetic ones. A central aspect of Judaism, one of the hardest for outsiders to understand: sacred persons and things are all colored "male" or "female," and the poetry of Judaism depends fundamentally on these colors. If you cannot see them, you mistake poetry for prose; you see a vividly colored world in black and white. If you *decline* to see them, if you approach with a parochial unwillingness to grasp the difference between maleness and femaleness—to discriminate on the basis of sex—you will never see the spiritual aurora borealis that give Judaism its uncanny glow.

The Sabbath is female, and Judaism embodies its femaleness by having women create and embody it.

Why light candles? The Sabbath requires joy. Israel must "call the Sabbath joy," Isaiah proclaims (58:13). Light is necessary on the Sabbath, Maimonides writes, because joy is necessary; to have joy, you need light. Joy also suggests passion, and the possibility that Israel should greet the Sabbath as a groom greets his bride. On Friday evening at dusk, the Talmud reports, Rabbi Hanina would say, "Come let us go out to greet the bride, the queen. . . . Rabbi Yannai would robe himself, stand and say: Approach, bride! Approach, bride!" Why did he do it?—out of religious duty, a sense of obligation? No, Rashi explains; "out of love."

The woman of the house who creates the Sabbath also symbolically embodies the Sabbath and the Sabbath bride. When she blesses the candles, Isaiah's voice echoes just out of hearing: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" (60:1). This verse is quoted in *L'kha dodi* ("Come, my darling"), the mystic hymn with which the Sabbath bride is welcomed every Friday evening. "Your God will rejoice over you," the hymn says, quoting Isaiah again (62:5), "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride."

And why can we say that, with the Temple gone, the home has become Judaism's Holy of Holies, and women the ministering priesthood? The Sabbath is associated with the creation of the universe. It honors creation's completion; recalls the end of God's six days of creative labor. The first thing God created was light. So it is fitting for more than one reason that the start of Sabbath be marked by the re-creation of light. ("Overdetermination" is typical of Judaism—the truth arriving like echoing river-sounds in a gorge, reaching you from many directions at once.)

The arrival of the holy Sabbath suggests, also, the arrival of the presence of God, of the *shekhinah*—who is female, like a bride; who is also associated with light, like the Sabbath. The *shekhinah* is described in the Talmud as radiant—"radiant as the sun." *Kol kallah*, the voice of the bride, is the beckoning voice of the Sabbath.

Lit by the flames she has just lighted, the woman's face recalls Moses' lit-up face when he

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comes down from Sinai. Moses veiled his lit-up face (as we saw in Part 2 of this series, "The Veil"); and when the woman screens her own lit-up face, we read the same deep theme-image. Why does she do it, screen her face with her hands? Law and poetry are intertwined. In Judaism you pronounce a blessing and *then* do the act to which it refers. But this particular blessing creates the Sabbath, and on the Sabbath you may not light fires. So she lights the candles first, then covers her eyes and recites the blessing over the lights and *then*, by uncovering her eyes (like a bride glimpsing her groom when he raises her veil), reveals them to herself. The most spiritually powerful act in Judaism.

Thus the cult of the couple on Sabbath eve. The wife lights and blesses the candles: bright joy, emblem of the *shekhinah*, re-created light of creation. Uncovering her eyes, she is symbolically transformed—priestess in the Holy of Holies, queenly Sabbath bride, living symbol of God's presence. The family sings a hymn of welcome to the ministering angels; they sing "Woman of Valor" to her, in praise of the *shekhinah* and the Sabbath bride and the housewife all at once. The husband blesses the wine and they drink. He blesses two braided loaves and they eat.

A day later, on Saturday night (as we saw in Part 1, "Separation"), they will light a braided candle, bless more wine and fragrant spices, extinguish a multi-wicked flame in the remaining wine. And in the meantime? Why do Jews prepare for the Sabbath by reading the Song of Songs? What are a husband and wife supposed to do on Friday night?

IT TAKES no midrashic genius to notice that *erev Shabbat* is a re-enactment and confirmation of the wedding ceremony. The same words—peace, joy, bride—predominate. And it is hardly surprising that the Sabbath is associated with sex. Perhaps the most decisive biblical comment on marital sex is Proverbs 5:18-19:

> Get joy from the wife of your youth, lovely doe, graceful gazelle; let her breasts satisfy you always; be staggered, always, by her love.

The point is to demand from a husband not merely fidelity but *devotion*. The language of these two verses is a sacred endorsement of sexual pleasure and passion; the purpose of sex is child-bearing, but also comfort and love. (When David gets Batsheva pregnant and the infant dies, husband and wife are heartbroken. "And David comforted Batsheva his wife; he came to her and slept with her" [2 Samuel 12:24].)

So it is only natural that the Talmud should see the Sabbath as a sexual event. Isaiah commands, call the Sabbath joy!, and the rabbis are not shy about spelling out exactly what the commandment entails. Sexual relations, the Talmud says, are especially blessed on the Sabbath, and Torah scholars in particular are *required* to make love to their wives on Friday night. In his hymn for Sabbath evening, the 16th-century mystic Isaac Luria writes: "He gives her joy/ in twofold measure./ Lights shine/ and streams of blessing."

FROM THE married couple we learn about Israel and God.

Israel's worship of God is wholly and deliberately divorced from pagan imagery and ritual. Virile, violent, lustful, blazing-phallus gods; stacked, fertile, whoring goddesses—the Bible turns away in disgust. But it also discusses the covenant between God and Israel in terms of marriage: and in this marriage Israel is the (often errant) bride. "For your Maker is your husband. . . . Can one reject the wife of his youth?" (Isaiah 54:5, 6—and other related phrases elsewhere, as we have seen). For the rabbis, the Song of Songs itself sets out the relationship between God and Israel in a way that remains startling or perhaps astonishing; God as male suitor, Israel as female object of God's desire. Marriage is no concession, no pragmatic arrangement; it is the culminating step in the creation of man, and it is a hint (distant and provisional, but a hint!) of what exists between man and God.

The rabbis take the hint. They also run it in reverse. In Deuteronomy, the Torah is described as Israel's inheritance; to make an interpretive point, the rabbis re-read the word "inheritance," *morashah*, as *me'urasah*, betrothed, wife-to-be—and thus the Torah becomes female, and Israel in relation to the Torah becomes male.

The point is not for a man's relation to the scroll of the Torah to be a sublimated version of his relation to a woman. The point is poetic, to create a living metaphor—to say not how things *ought* to be but how they are; to say of the connection between Jews and the Torah: it is as vivid and passionate as the connection between a man and a woman. Like man and wife, Israel and the Torah are one.

And that brings us back to Akiba, and to Akiba's wife—whose name was also Rachel. She is a celebrated figure in the Talmud.

The rabbis ask, "Who is rich?" Rabbi Akiba's answer: "He who has a wife whose deeds are beautiful." Which is merely interesting until we realize

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that he was not making an abstract pronouncement; he was referring to his own wife.

She had insisted that, although he was a grown man with his own household, Akiba was still ignorant of Torah and should therefore drop what he was doing and get educated. And she stood by him while he went away and studied for years, and then went away again and studied some more, until he had become the leading sage of his generation. Whereupon, surrounded by his disciples, he announced that he owed everything and *they* owed everything to her.

In answering "Who is rich?," Akiba turned his own grateful love into a universal principle and put it at the center of rabbinic Judaism. More than anyone else, Akiba built the Bible's predisposition into Judaism's cult of marriage, based on a vivid awareness of the perfect asymmetry of creation.

WHEN HE made his astounding statement about the Song of Songs, Akiba offered no theory or explanation. But in ranking it above the Psalms and Isaiah, above Jeremiah and Ezekiel, above Numbers and Leviticus and Deuteronomy, above even Exodus and Genesis, he changed Judaism forever. Why did he do it? That this great and noble scholar and martyr should have taught that when you go to the heart of Judaism—through all the gates, portals, doorways, inner curtains—you arrive at the unrestrained, almost unseemly joy of the Song of Songs . . . looking at the austere walls from the outside, who would have guessed it?

When Newton grasped the idea of universal gravitation, it was the greatest achievement in the history of science. Some say the vision was triggered by the fall of an apple. Maybe not, but the details don't matter. The apple is plausible; one day he understood the whole physical structure of the universe, when (perhaps) he saw an apple fall. Akiba achieved something even greater: one day he understood the whole moral structure of the universe. "This is Akiba's midrash," Judah Goldin writes in an extraordinary essay. "Before all the world Israel is to proclaim what *love* of God is." And why did Akiba say it? Because he loved his wife. It all came clear to him when (perhaps) he held his wife in his arms.

It is a commandment for every Jew to write a whole Torah scroll by himself, but few can do it, and in practice the law is lenient: the scribe leaves a few letters carefully outlined but empty, and if you ink them in, you are said to have performed the commandment and written the scroll. Jewish thought suggests that God did the same, in essence, when He created the universe; He left an unfinished letter as an invitation to each married couple to finish the work of creation. (Perhaps there is one letter that needs to be filled in again and again. Perhaps there are many.) When a man and woman are married, no doubt the universe pauses (maybe the angels hold their breath?)—waiting to see whether the couple have it in them to finish the work of creation. "For man is not so called except when male and female are one."

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OBSERVATIONS

Up from Hip-Hop

John H. McWhorter

LAST SEPTEMBER, America's most popular movie was, briefly, an amusing if rather ordinary film called *Barbershop*. What made the movie notorious were a few lines of dialogue. Eddie, the oldest barber in a shop in a black Chicago neighborhood that has seen better days, grouses: "The problem with us black folks is we gotta stop lying!" He then illustrates his point by means of some salutary truth-telling, exclaiming: "F—k Jesse Jackson!" and "O.J. did it!" Having thus dispatched the black leader who regards himself as the rightful heir to Martin Luther King, Jr., and indicted the canonically innocent O.J. Simpson as a murderer, Eddie closes the movie by observing that King himself was a "ho'" (whore).

As if on cue, Jesse Jackson weighed in with a fury, demanding that MGM delete the offending lines from videotape and DVD editions of the film; Reverend Al Sharpton promptly chimed in. But the movie itself was way ahead of these two increasingly irrelevant weathervanes of black opinion. To most of the characters in *Barbershop*, Eddie's broadsides are shocking but fair—and howlingly funny. When one customer does take offense at the Jackson comment, Eddie delivers the most quoted line of the film: "If we can't talk straight in the barbershop, then where *can* we talk straight?"

Meaning: the duty of black Americans is no longer to maintain, at all costs, a united front in the face of the white establishment, or to adopt a permanently defensive crouch against a mythical "racist" backlash. Nor, to judge by *Barbershop*, is upward striving seen any longer as antithetical to being "really black." In the film, the shop itself is the usual scruffy dive, but Calvin, the owner and the movie's protagonist, lives in a comfortable home with a poised, intelligent wife. Calvin (played by the rapper Ice Cube) is thinking of selling the shop and putting the money into a recording studio to provide a better life for the child he and his wife are expecting, but he is also tempted to keep the shop open as a bastion of community support in a neighborhood where teens so often go wrong. Either way, we have come a long distance from the *New Jack City* gangster cycle of black films ten years ago. There, the choice was usually presented as working for chump change at the post office or raking in the bucks selling drugs on the street. Half the cast would be dead by the final reel, and critics were always ready to hail another "authentic" cry of despair from people powerless to save themselves.

To be sure, there are signs of a countervailing message even in *Barbershop*, not to mention elsewhere in black popular culture, and I had better deal with them straightaway lest I be accused of sugarcoating. For instance: a subplot in the movie pits a well-spoken, rightward-leaning black barber against the one white barber; the latter has adopted a hip-hop lingo and wardrobe, flaunts his black girlfriend, and considers himself "blacker" than black. The movie

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gives this "white Negro" a pass, the message being the grand old canard that at heart, "black" *is* the street.

The same message was crystallized in *8 Mile*, the recent debut film of the white rapper Eminem. Critics have fallen all over themselves to praise this movie as an eloquent exploration of interracial mixing and "working-class despair," although on both counts it is ultimately old wine in a new bottle. On the subject of class, *8 Mile* is pure Hollywood formula: working stiff starts at the bottom (Bunny Rabbit, the character played by Eminem, is barely hanging on to a factory job while living in a trailer park with his drunken layabout mother), suffers stinging failure (not only does Bunny Rabbit choke in a "slam" contest under the withering rhymed insults of the local black champion, but a new girlfriend cheats on him), the sun inexplicably breaks through the clouds (Mom wins at Bingo, the factory foreman softens up), and victory arrives at last when our hero bests the rap slammer in a rematch. Hollywood has been working this routine since before the talkies.

The race message is the same old thing as well—at least once we get past the novelty of seeing a white boy running with a black crowd and prefacing every second sentence with "Yo." Some critics were struck by the fact that nobody in the movie, white or black, comments negatively when Bunny Rabbit's girlfriend has sex with a black man. But this, too, is not exactly unheard of, and besides, the filmmaker's point is rather ambiguous: the girlfriend comes from a different part of town, always seems to turn up unexpectedly, and is illuminated in a shaft of light that gives her an otherworldly air—as if black men succumb to white women only in some alternative reality.

The same ambiguity seems to extend to the Eminem character, who, "black" as he supposedly is, sleeps exclusively white. Where Bunny Rabbit does demonstrate his "blackness" is in his poverty, which, conventionally enough, turns out also to be his trump card. In the final slam contest, he silences his black nemesis by revealing a little secret: that the poor fellow went to a good school and comes from a middle-class, two-parent home. Stripped of his "authenticity," the man is left speechless as the rowdy black audience shouts him off the stage. To be black is to be at the bottom.

Many critics were also charmed by the "slam" contests themselves, in which contestants compete by means of loose rhymes set to a beat-box rhythm, mixing self-aggrandizement with ad hominem disparagement. There is indeed a certain knack to the spontaneous rhyming, but the viciousness of the insults is only another gloss on the idea that to be black is to be uncivil and perpetually alienated—itself a consequence, supposedly, of the aforementioned working-class despair. (In one scene, a weary crowd of workers breaks into a spontaneous slam contest while waiting in line at an outdoor food truck.) Must one point out that senseless verbal abuse is by no means an inevitable response to a difficult life? Black people mired much deeper in misery during the Depression created no equivalent to today's rap slamming—"playing the dozens," with its playful insults, was another matter altogether—nor is there any prototype for this sulfurous tone in any African tradition.

On the subject of poetry as agitprop, I should also mention the Spoken Word movement. It would be oversimplifying to say that Spoken Word is just hip-hop without the instrumental background beat, but hip-hop's cocky cadences, jagged rhythms, verbal prolixity, and alienated message are a foundational element in the mix. In "slam" contests at places like the Nuyorican Café in New York, the poets who tend to move audiences the most are the ones channeling a formulaic rage. Spoken Word performances do include tender love poems and nonconfrontational prose monologues, but an evening at the Nuyorican when all of the entries were of these latter types would be considered an off night, whereas I doubt anyone would regard a session made up exclusively of spikier offerings as much of a problem.

This past fall, in *Def Poetry Jam*, Spoken Word came to Broadway. The show was produced by the hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, founder of the Def Jam recording label and impresario of an earlier HBO series along the same lines. It was a rich evening. There was no denying that the nine champions gathered by Simmons were a talented bunch. Spoken Word scansion—where it exists—is on the loose side, and rhyming is optional and often approximate: the guiding impulse is to create dazzling showers of verbiage played against angular rhythms, the dazzle itself being reminiscent of operatic cadenzas. Spoken Word is also a self-consciously demotic art, aimed at the ordinary listener. But performers clearly craft their work down to the word, and the feats of diction and memorization alone can be stunning.

Yet the adversarial fetish, if one may call it that, makes Spoken Word a narrower art than it might be. At *Def Poetry Jam*, three gimmicks were sure to get a rise out of the audience. One was slipping into black street flavor: a nicely placed funky or allusions to buttocks and vaginas invariably elicited whoops of approval. Another was lacing one's poems with references to Spam, or McDonald's, or other brand names from TV commercials. The third, and most constricting, was the easy reaching for recreational outrage.

The Chinese-American poet Beau Sia literally hollered his way through the whole show. I got it—he was playing against the stereotype of Asians as quiet and deferen-

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tial. But whatever one's color, shouting hinders eloquence. *Def Poetry Jam*'s poster depicts all of Sia's fellow performers wearing gentle, reflective expressions, but a more honest version would picture at least seven of the performers in glowering high dudgeon, their reigning theme a contemptuous indictment of the American status quo. *Def Poetry Jam* was, in fact, less a show than a rally. Facing front, proudly smug, the performers were saying that either you were with them or you were a clueless bigot. The night I attended, I started wondering around the middle of the first act how long the middle-aged white women in the row ahead of me would last; they were gone after intermission.

The ending said it all. Each poet took a turn telling us in a few tart sentences why "I Write America." The endlessly grim Black Ice informed his audience that the United States government had planned the September 11 attacks, and that therefore he just *watches* America; for this, he got one of the biggest hands of the night. (His sentiment was on a par with Amiri Baraka's notorious lines, delivered at his October debut as New Jersey's poet laureate, "Who knew the World Trade Center was gonna get bombed? / Who told 4,000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers to stay home that day? / Why did Sharon stay away?") At *Def Poetry Jam*, the lights faded out on all nine performers venting their grievances in one grand cacophony.

WHY, THEN, do I insist that things are looking up? Because, whatever the visceral thrills of continuing to *play* the underdog, most blacks are well aware that dignity no longer means clinging to the label of victimhood. It means refusing to let obstacles hold them back, especially when the obstacles are so many fewer than those faced by their ancestors. Even at *Def Poetry Jam*, the superficial nature of the black-rage routine made itself clear. Besides Black Ice's 9/11 line, the two other moments that got the biggest audience reaction were (a) when wayward black fathers were admonished to take care of their children and (b) when black men were scolded about drifting into criminality and becoming "just another f—kin' nigger." They, too, came from Black Ice.

In any case, despite the attention paid to rabble-rousers, and despite the sullen ubiquity of hip-hop, there is an ever stronger strain running through black popular culture that insists on bringing things back to earth. A nice example was last fall's Off-Broadway, musical-theater version of *Crowns*, a coffee-table book that celebrates, of all things, the Sunday hats worn by black women to church. In the show, a black high-school girl from Brooklyn is sent to live with her middle-aged relatives in South Carolina after her brother is shot to death on the streets. Finding her new environment dismayingly "unhip," Yolonda soon enough warms to the matchless strength of black women who make the best of a hard life with the aid of a good dose of "hattitude"—the bone-deep pride that, among other things, makes a woman look good in a flashy hat.

For *Crowns*, the anti-white, anti-establishment stance is just a pose, and a childish one at that. Indeed; these days, the pose is not even exclusive to blacks but common coin among America's teens and twenty-somethings—if not a defining trait well into middle age, as David Brooks suggests in *Bobos in Paradise*. And just as Brooks's vegetarians and Nader voters fight like the management consultants they are to get their children into top schools and nurse the returns on their mutual funds, black America's embrace of hip-hop is more costume than skin.

One way to measure the true state of affairs is to consider what has *not* been playing in New York lately. For one thing, no recent film has feted the black criminal. On the contrary, last summer saw two jocular parodies of 1970's blaxploitation films: the minor hit *Undercover Brother* and Beyoncé Knowles's portrayal of Foxxy Cleopatra, a character in the *Austin Powers* "threequel." As for *Antwone Fisher*, Denzel Washington's directorial debut, it does feature a sullen young black protagonist who is referred to a psychiatrist for anger management after getting into a scuffle, but despite his tragic upbringing, Antwone turns out to be sufficiently solid and self-directed to work out the issues and go on to a gracious life.

Theater, too, is suggestive for what is absent as much as for what is present. Six years ago, George C. Wolfe's *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk* mobilized music and tap dance to preach the gospel of permanent victimhood. But last fall, at Harlem's Apollo Theater, Wolfe gave us *Harlem Song*, a slick little theme-park-style show celebrating the history of the neighborhood. Wolfe festooned the drama with excerpts from filmed interviews of elderly Harlem residents who, despite the horrors they grew up in, were conspicuously lacking in the "don't-tread-on-me" air of many of their children and grandchildren. In one number, 1920's Harlemites strolled to the smart strut of a vamp, ogling the black celebrities of the day and murmuring "Well, alright, then" with an air of proprietary admiration.

The show only dimly conveyed why Harlem took such a bad turn in the 1960's. Like most people who have lived through gradual societal change, the oldsters in the filmed interviews pointed to symptoms—drugs, riots, the pathologies bred in the housing projects—but missed the cause: the elevation of alienation and rebellion by America's cultural elites, and the social policies that flowed therefrom. But what was noteworthy was that *Harlem Song* did not exploit its musings on the 60's as an occasion for knee-jerk outrage.

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After all, Wolfe could easily have recycled the angry hip-hop substratum of *Bring in da Noise* as a Big Ending for *Harlem Song*, and ten years ago he probably would have. That is when, in *Jelly's Last Jam*, he fashioned an admittedly brilliant, two-and-a-half hour indictment of Jelly Roll Morton, a creole musician, as much white as black, whose crime was the boast that he had invented jazz; the show's own crime was to have introduced so many people to a genius of jazz in so distorted a fashion. In *Harlem Song*, which was about victory, not victimhood, Wolfe was less interested in this brand of cultural politics. That also meant that the show unfortunately petered out toward the end, but at least the middle-aged white women in the row across from me were in their seats at the final curtain.

What, finally, about the once-popular theme of integration? Last fall, in *Far From Heaven*, the director Todd Haynes revisited Douglas Sirk's 1955 *All That Heaven Allows*, a movie in which a suburban housewife falls in love with her gardener, played by Rock Hudson. The issue then was class difference; today, Haynes made the gardener a black man. Where the Rock Hudson character was a lover of poetry, the black gardener turns out to be well-informed about modern art, discoursing casually about Joan Miró.

In the scheme of things, this last was a significant touch. In the 1950's, some white filmmakers made a point of depicting black characters who were as adept as whites in all endeavors. Bill Cosby's erudite undercover agent Scotty on *I Spy*, the 60's television series, sprang from the same impulse. But by the time *I Spy* went off the air in 1968, the days of the Scotties were numbered. As separatist ideology took hold of black America, such characters came to be regarded as so many white wannabes co-opted by The Man. Any white writer who dared to create a black like Scotty—a Rhodes scholar, no less—would have been tarred as a covert racist. What came next was, instead, *Shaft*—"big, bold, black, and bad"—and *The Jeffersons*.

Far From Heaven has not been the only place on the recent pop scene where the integrationist ideal is back. In *Hairspray*, a runaway hit musical set in the year 1962, a Baltimore high-school girl seeks to integrate a dance show on local television. Her otherwise apolitical parents risk imprisonment to help her in her fight, local blacks warmly embrace her cause, and her best friend blithely hooks up with a black man in a display of easy interracial harmony that is decidedly ahistorical for that place and time. The very anachronism is, however, what makes the show relevant to *our* time. Its message is that integration is where we are headed.

At one point in *Hairspray*, three of the black chorus girls appear dressed as the Supremes, ushering in a scene by belting out "Welcome to the 60's." The sequence lasts only about half a minute, but both times I was there, the mostly white audience went crazy; the Motown sound is now imprinted as America's soul food. And when the show climaxes in a rousing dance number, "You Can't Stop the Beat" (of integration, that is)—a number notorious for getting audiences to mime the choreography in their seats—the sentiment no longer feels like the pure fantasy it seemed to represent in 1988 when the film on which *Hairspray* is based was first released.

Of course, *Hairspray* is a cartoon confection. But in the world of the Broadway theater, at least, integration is not an ideal at all but a living reality, in the sense that it is now perfectly ordinary for black performers to be cast in "white" lead roles with neither producers, reviewers, nor audiences batting an eye. In last fall's revival of the Stephen Sondheim musical *Into the Woods*, Vanessa Williams starred as the witch, a part originated in 1987 by Bernadette Peters. Sheryl Lee Ralph is playing a patrician celebrity in the bonbon *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, set in the lily-white 1920's of John Held, Jr. cartoons. Brian Stokes Mitchell, who has been anointed as Broadway's best baritone, period, is currently starring in a revival of *Man of la Mancha*. And even the revival of *Oklahoma!*, which strives for gritty realism in its depiction of an Oklahoma frontier town circa 1907, features two black chorus members. Given the actuality of turn-of-the-century Oklahoma, these black performers are in effect playing white people.

The formulaic rage of hip-hop and Spoken Word is not going away any time soon. But it is a mere vaudeville, reflecting the true soul of black America no more than vaudeville reflected white America's a century ago. "If we can't talk straight in the barbershop, where *can* we talk straight?," Eddie asks in *Barbershop*. On the evidence of these plays and films, straight talk is extending far beyond the barbershop.

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Observations

The Cohabitation Blues

Kay S. Hymowitz

This past fall, the American Law Institute, an influential organization of lawyers, judges, and legal academics, published a huge, decade-in-the-making tome titled *Principles of the Law of Family Dissolution*.[1] The report's heft reflects its aspiration, which is to bring up to date an entire body of law that has changed little since Richard Nixon was in the White House. Among its many recommendations is a proposal that family-court judges and state legislatures treat the break-up of live-in partners much as they would that of a married couple, including, where appropriate, the division of property and the payment of alimony. As Grace Ganz Blumberg, one of the report's authors told *USA Today*, "If it looks like a marriage, it should be treated like one."

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this proposal was the great national yawn that greeted it. Of all the deviancies Americans have "defined down" over the past decades (to borrow the formulation of Daniel Patrick Moynihan), none has been so completely accepted as "living together." Once known as "living in sin" because of its defiance of religious strictures against premarital sex, or as "shacking up" because of its association with the supposedly vulgar ways of poor, rural folk, living together is now as respectably bourgeois as Chinese take-out for Sunday dinner.

Thirty years ago or so, young people fresh out of college tried every deception in the book to avoid telling their parents they were moving in with their boyfriends or girlfriends. To break the news, they had good reason to believe, would be to bring on weeping, wailing, disinheritance, possibly even a heart attack. I got away easily enough. My parents were worldly, Kennedy-era progressives, not the sort to make a scene about such things. After my big announcement, my father simply pursed his lips and refused to look me in the eye, while my mother knitted her hands, wondering whether my sullied reputation would ruin my marriage prospects. How things have changed. This Thanksgiving my parents welcomed into their guestroom my niece and her live-in boyfriend as if they were Uncle Joe and Aunt Millie.

My parents have not simply come to tolerate what people in the policy world call "cohabitation." It is not just another youthful fashion to which they have resigned themselves, like hip-hop music. Living together has become a settled part of their own social landscape. It is not at all unusual now to find widows and widowers of my parents' age who, whether to maintain a modicum of independence or to protect their children from inheritance hassles, are sharing condos in Fort Lauderdale with the blessing of neither clergy nor judge. Even nursing-home managers have been forced to accommodate themselves to the idea of coed roommates.

Still, it is the young and fertile who are most likely to share a bed and rent with someone of the opposite sex. This has led some observers to worry that the practice might further injure the institution of marriage, already limping along after the

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[1] American Law Institute, 1,187 pp., $145.00, $49.00 (paper).

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assault of the divorce revolution. Other commentators have welcomed the trend. For them, the growing number of cohabiters is proof of the country's increasing tolerance for individual choice and "diversity." In their recent book, *Joined at the Heart: The Transformation of the American Family*,[2] Al and Tipper Gore make this case, citing cohabitation, gay parenting, divorce, and "blended" families as inspiring signs of American "creativity" and "resilience."

Neither side in this debate has it quite right. Americans may not be keen to put the sin back into living together, but that does not mean they consider marriage just one option among a smorgasbord of possible "lifestyles." They still see a clear distinction between matrimony and extramarital rent-sharing—and for an abundance of good reasons.

THE WIDE acceptance of living together has its origins in the convergence of several of the most powerful cultural currents of the 1960's. The sexual revolution and feminism played key roles, of course, as baby-boomers revolted against the stigma long attached to extramarital sex and proclaimed erotic fulfillment to be a personal right, for women as well as for men. But no less important was the rise of the knowledge economy. Younger members of the educated class found themselves needing more years of schooling and apprenticeship to establish themselves as the doctors, lawyers, and professors they increasingly wished to be. To meet the new demands of post-industrial career-building, they began not only to put off marriage—in 1960, the average age of marriage was twenty for women and twenty-three for men, while today it is, respectively, twenty-five and twenty-seven—but to redefine the early years of adulthood. The decade after college became a kind of post-adolescence, part middle-class independence, part high school.

Especially during the years before real-estate prices in the big cities skyrocketed, a recent female graduate could live in her own apartment like a grown-up while continuing to study, date, and "explore her identity" like a coed. If she met a great guy and began to sleep with him regularly, it made perfect sense for them to move in together. They could get to know each other better and decide later whether to make things permanent by marrying. In many cases, and despite predictions that living together would bring an end to bourgeois civilization, the couple did just that. Shacking up or no, 90 percent of baby-boomers got married—numbers little different from those of their grandparents—and it was only after they tied the knot that they went on to fill their Volvos with baby seats.

It is no surprise that today's twenty-somethings have adopted the arrangements invented by their parents. Career preparation has, in many cases, become an even longer grind, and real-estate prices have placed single-payer apartments out of the reach of most graduate students and entry-level workers. The 2000 census reports that the number of households with an unmarried couple grew by 72 percent over the previous decade; the increase since 1970 has been eight-fold. About half of the couples who married in the 1990's report living together before exchanging rings, and experts estimate that as many as two-thirds of Americans will live with someone of the opposite sex before they finally get hitched.

YET, AS numbers this vast suggest, the original baby-boomer script is only part of the story of what it means today to be young and living together. For one thing, as people have started to marry ever later—particularly the highly educated, who are often still single when their 30th birthdays roll around—the interests of men and women have diverged in troubling ways.

In my day, no one gave a moment's thought to the idea that men and women might have different biological agendas. This was not a problem when living together meant a few years of post-campus "self-exploration" and career development. But now it often drags on into the years when women begin nervously checking their biological clocks and when their boyfriends and potential husbands—being men—start to eye the next graduating class of girls arriving from Providence or Cambridge.

Stories abound about the female lawyer or stockbroker in her mid-thirties who finally recognizes, after living with her boyfriend for years, that he is not simply trying to figure out whether he is "ready to commit"; the guy is never going to marry her. As recent books like Sylvia Anne Hewlett's *Creating A Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*[3] and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman*[4] describe it, the practice of living together has carved out space for many young women to achieve their brilliant careers—and for many young men to behave badly. The title of the new book by Rick Marin says it all: *Cad: Confessions of a Toxic Bachelor*.[5]

Nor are broken hearts and ticking biological clocks the worst of the problems associated with cohabitation. Educated elites may have been the first to adopt the practice—and are largely responsible for its current respectability—but living together is actually far more common among those *without* college degrees.

For these Americans, living together is often a different matter en-

[2] Henry Holt, 417 pp., $26.00.

[3] Talk/Miramax, 334 pp., $22.00. See Lisa Schiffren's discussion of the book in "Lifestyles of the Rich and Infertile," COMMENTARY, July-August 2002.

[4] Broadway, 206 pp., $22.95.

[5] Hyperion, 284 pp., $23.95.

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tirely: less an excellent post-adolescent adventure than an ambiguous and short-lived substitute for marriage, and one that frequently involves children. Over one-third of cohabiting households today include children under eighteen. In fact, much of the increase in the number of single mothers we have seen in the past fifteen years has involved young women in their twenties who are living with their boyfriends. Two of every five out-of-wedlock births are to parents who are cohabiting.

On the surface, this might appear to be a heartening trend; at least more children than we realized are living with their fathers. But a closer look at these households should dispel illusion. Cohabiting relationships, particularly those that do not culminate within a few years in marriage, are short-lived. Only a sixth of couples who live together do so for at least three years, and only a tenth for five years. A study of cohabiting couples conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development between 1984 and 1994 paints an especially troubling picture. While the share of children born to cohabiting couples doubled during that period, an increasing number of cohabiters were breaking up, and those who were not were even less likely to marry. Worse, many of these individuals were "serial cohabiters," moving from one live-in relationship to another. Today a full 70 percent of the children living with a cohabiting couple are the offspring of only one partner.

As the researcher Larry Bumpass has noted, even as divorce rates have leveled off in recent years, the growing number of cohabiting couples with children has hidden the true magnitude of the disruption that has taken place in American families. By just about every measure, and controlling for race and income, children living in these unstable arrangements are at risk: of academic failure, of dropping out of school, of early sex, of drug use. Indeed, there is evidence that when children live with their mother and a man who is not their biological father they are more likely to have such problems than when they live with their mothers alone. Girls in these arrangements are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse, victims of their mother's live–in partners and of what the *New York Post* has called "the boyfriend problem."

THESE FACTS might seem to require some qualification of any simple "approve" or "disapprove" answer when it comes to questions about living together. But there is still a tendency in some quarters to believe that when a taboo is broken, we are obliged to call it progress. This is the view taken by the American Law Institute in its ambitious proposals for overhauling the law of "family dissolution." "As the incidence of cohabitation has dramatically increased and cohabitation has become socially acceptable at all levels of society," the group's report declares, "it has become increasingly implausible to attribute special significance to the parties' failure to marry."

Even forgetting for a moment the question of children, this is an odd conclusion, if for no other reason than that cohabiters themselves see a special significance in their decision not to marry. The Alternatives to Marriage Project, an outfit founded by a "happily unmarried couple" named Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot, lists on its website any number of reasons why couples might not want to wed: the time is not right, they want to avoid divorce, they "don't want to become a wife (or husband)." Moreover, there is plenty of evidence that, on the whole, cohabiters behave differently from married couples, even beyond the fact that they end their relationships more quickly.

As Maggie Gallagher and Linda Waite summarize the research in *The Case for Marriage* (2000), cohabiters tend to lead more separate social lives. They keep their finances separate. They do not get insurance together. They are more likely to be unfaithful to their partners and to reject the ideal of fidelity. People who cohabit are, in sum, less likely to be seeking either permanence or interdependence—the very things that couples who marry say they want, even if they frequently fail to achieve them.

The truth is that, even after nearly a half-century of seeing marriage battered and ridiculed, Americans remain deeply romantic about the institution, precisely because it represents the stability and clarity otherwise missing in their lives. The conditions that have weakened the social and psychological credibility of pledging oneself to another "till death do us part" have only raised its imaginative value. Living together may represent youth, freedom, choice, openness to change—some of the qualities most prized by contemporary Americans—but marriage embodies solidity, dependability, and lasting memory, qualities longed for by human beings since they first recognized their mortality, and made all the more precious by the fickle, fevered spirit of our times.

Surveys show that the vast majority of Americans hope to marry and to remain married for life, and census figures project that some 90 percent of American men and women will eventually go to the altar. Among teenagers, an age group not exactly known for staid conventionality, 80 percent of girls and 73 percent of boys say that a good marriage is "extremely important" to their notion of the good life. The Fragile Families Project, an extensive study of inner-city out-of-wedlock births, found that even poorer cohabiting couples see marriage as quite different from living together, and that two-thirds of the mothers and three-quarters of the fathers in these households agree "it is better for children if their parents are married."

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For further proof that Americans remain devoted to the ideal of marriage, one can also turn to popular culture. Not so long ago, the biggest successes on prime-time television were shows like *Seinfeld*, about a group of self-absorbed singles, and *Married with Children*, a sour send-up of married life. Now almost every night of the week one can turn to a "reality show" whose main theme is matrimony. The first offering several seasons ago was *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?* This year we have had *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, and Fox's pricelessly titled *Joe Millionaire*. In all of these shows, a singleton seeks his or her future spouse among a crowd of young people who appear to have spent countless hours at the gym sculpting their triceps and abs, a plus for contemporary marriageability much as mastery of the quadrille was for Jane Austen's Emma. One can be sure that the millions who tune into these shows are not just hoping to see a couple decide to move in together.

MTV's hit series *The Osbournes* is another marriage-based "reality show" that, for all its puerile, gross-out humor, portrays the sort of happy, devotedly married couple that was supposed to have gone the way of Ozzie and Harriet. On another top show, *Will and Grace*, the female lead has spent years trying to find happiness living with her best friend, a gay man, and even prepared to have a baby by him. This fall the writers gave up on that conceit and married Grace off—to a Jewish doctor, no less—a move that won huge ratings. And last summer millions of Americans filled movie theaters to make a surprise hit of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Does anyone think they would have flocked to *My Big Fat Greek Commitment Ceremony*?

THE PROBLEM with living together is not simply that it fails to satisfy the widespread longing, as well as the social need, for more permanent and stable unions. Normalizing cohabitation, not just as a way station between dating and marriage but as a suitable arrangement in which to rear children, threatens the best tradition of American individualism. Those who marry make a deliberate, considered choice. By announcing "I do" in public, they voluntarily impose limits on themselves, taking formal responsibility for a spouse and children. More than that, they commit themselves to mutual support, announcing to the wider community that they intend to be a self-reliant unit.

This is not the case with cohabiters. When they decide to live together rather than to marry, they make a very different choice: one *not* to take formal responsibility for their partners. This hardly means that all cohabiters are scoundrels (or that all married people are upstanding). But it does mean that the obligations of cohabiters are at best ambiguous, a situation that often leads to demands for the state to intervene.

As the American Law Institute reports, 20 percent of court cases having to do with family dissolution now involve cohabiting couples. At the same time, many of the self-appointed spokesmen for those who live together have urged that the U.S. follow the European model, especially by erasing any distinction between marriage and living together in the distribution of various public benefits. Though the irony probably escapes them, these are people who, having refused the solemnities of a state sanction for their relationships, insist on their right to the state's help when, predictably, those relationships begin to break down.

This is a step too far. Marriage is a promise, an "I will," involving duties not just to a husband or wife but to children, grandchildren, parents, the community, and even the state. Living together is at best a maybe, an "I might." It may not be deviant, but neither is it something to celebrate, in custom or in law.

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MUSIC

Selling Dvořák Short

Terry Teachout

WHAT MAKES a composer great? The quality of his music is the obvious answer—and the right one. But few listeners (and surprisingly few critics) are self-confident enough to vouch for a composer solely on the basis of their own unsupported evaluation of his art. Instead, they look for reassuring outward signs of significance. Was he born in Austria or Germany? Did he turn out a body of large-scale works that employ the sonata-allegro form? Was he careful to keep "local color" out of his music, other than for occasional effect? Above all, was his private life sufficiently messy to make possible the writing of a readable biography? The higher a composer scores on this checklist, the more likely that he will be acclaimed as great.

Judged by such standards, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) is bound to fall short. To begin with, he was Czech, and though he was an accomplished symphonist whose grasp of the Austro-German idiom was so complete that no less a master of form than Johannes Brahms praised him enthusiastically, many of his best-known works are nonetheless redolent of Czech folk music. Furthermore, his life was uneventful, at least by the sensational standards of such other 19th-century composers as Berlioz, Schumann, or Liszt, and no English-language biographer has yet succeeded in writing about him interestingly.

For all these reasons, it should come as no surprise that while some of Dvořák's music has made its way into the standard repertory, he has never been fully accepted as a key figure of the Romantic era. The once-common critical line on his music was that it was charming but lacked the structural rigor of the Austro-German masters. (George Bernard Shaw once declared with amused condescension that the Eighth Symphony was "very nearly up to the level of a Rossini overture, and would make excellent promenade music at the summer *fêtes* out in the grounds.") Even now, he is very often taken for granted, rather in the manner of a novelist like Trollope or a painter like Corot, and though his work is widely admired, it tends not to get written about, save by his fellow Czechs.

Hence it is of no small interest that Michael B. Beckerman, an American academic who specializes in Czech music, has published a book, *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer's Inner Life*, whose avowed purpose is to bring about a revaluation.[1] As Beckerman writes in his introduction:

> That Dvořák was modest, straightforward, and uncomplicated is true beyond a doubt—but he was also fully aware of his own worth, deceptive, and complex. That is why he is worth writing about, and more important, why he is no second-tier master but rather the equal of Wagner, Beethoven, and Brahms.

This is a dramatic, even spectacular claim, and it must be said at the outset that Beckerman promises more than he delivers. In fact, his book is a diffuse, quirky piece of work whose nonscholarly appeal is likely to be limited. Though the au-

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[1] Norton, 272 pp., $29.95.

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thor never says so, *New Worlds of Dvořák* is not a "through-composed" monograph but a collection of discontinuous essays that have been stitched together somewhat clumsily. Like much of today's scholarly writing, it is both overpersonal ("I use the word 'influence' rather glibly, as if I knew what it really meant") and gratingly chatty ("He was king of the mountain, the biggest *hombre* in the country, and he could, by God, do what he wanted to do").

Yet in spite of these defects, Beckerman's book is worth reading by anyone with a serious interest in the music of Dvořák. To be sure, few will put down *New Worlds of Dvořák* persuaded that its subject was the equal of Beethoven, or even Wagner. But fewer still of those who bear with the author throughout the twists and turns of his idiosyncratic reflections on the greatest of Czech composers will ever again be inclined to sell Antonín Dvořák short.

No classical composer has sprung from humbler beginnings than Dvořák, whose father was a village butcher. Though he started to play violin at the age of six, he was no prodigy, and did not begin serious musical study until the age of twelve. By 1859 he had finished his studies and was playing viola in a Prague dance band, and a few years after that he was composing in earnest. He was slow to grasp the principles of organically developed, large-scale musical form ("I had not technique enough to express all that was in me," he later confessed), but he systematically worked his way through the standard forms and in time mastered them all.

In 1877, Dvořák's music came to the attention of Brahms, who promptly recommended the younger composer to Fritz Simrock, his Berlin publisher. A year later, Simrock brought out the first set of *Slavonic Dances*, a group of character pieces for piano duet (later orchestrated), and their immediate popularity made Dvořák the 19th-century equivalent of an overnight celebrity. For the remainder of his life, he would be one of the world's best-known composers.

By all accounts Dvořák was modest and shy, sometimes brusque but nonetheless well-liked, ill-educated but intelligent, and devoutly religious.[2] A heavy drinker, he appears to have suffered from a severe case of agoraphobia that often made it impossible for him to go out in public without being accompanied by a close companion, and it seems probable that he drank as a way of dealing with stress. Beyond this, little need be said about his private life prior to 1892, when he moved to New York City to become the artistic director of the National Conservatory of Music. Dvořák lived to compose, and his real life—his interior life—is for the most part accessible only through his music.

A hugely prolific composer who left behind work of permanent interest in every musical genre, Dvořák was stylistically far more wide-ranging than is commonly supposed. To be sure, his most popular pieces all incorporate musical devices which, though not always specifically Czech, are nonetheless nationalistic in flavor. Compositions like the *Slavonic Dances* and the later A Major Piano Quintet, Op. 81 (1887) and Eighth Symphony in G Major, Op. 88 (1889) make use of Central European song and dance forms and contain thematic material whose modal coloration and major-minor fluctuations have a similarly Slavonic cast. The E Minor Trio ("Dumka"), Op. 90 (1891), one of his most formally innovative works, consists of six movements, each one a rhapsody based on a Ukrainian song form.[3] Even Dvořák's preferred anapestic rhythms derive from the Czech language, in which all words are accented on the first syllable.

Midway through his career, though, Dvořák veered away from nationalism to compose a number of pieces, including the *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78 (1877) and the F Minor Piano Trio, Op. 65 (1883), in which his interest in the abstract music of Brahms came to the fore. Brahms and Dvořák, as Beckerman writes, were exceptionally close colleagues:

> Brahms amazed Dvořák by undertaking the tiresome task of checking the proofs of the [Ninth Symphony], and he told a friend as he was about to hear the Cello Concerto, "You will hear a piece today. A piece by a man!" Dvořák believed that Brahms was a great master, and Brahms thought Dvořák to be his greatest living contemporary.

Yet unlike his older, more austere colleague, Dvořák remained open to other influences. His music had always contained naively picturesque elements—bird calls, marches, dance scenes—and he was fascinated by opera from the very beginning of his composing life. Though he was discouraged from writing program music by the circle of anti-Wagnerites led by Brahms and the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, who had taken him up so enthusiastically, his dramatic streak reemerged at the end of his life, when he devoted himself exclusively to writing Wagner-influenced operas and programmatic tone poems *à la* Liszt.

At the same time, Dvořák's inter-

[2] Dvořák's wry account of receiving an honorary degree from Cambridge University in 1890, as quoted by Beckerman, says much about his personality: "All the faces so grave and it seemed that none could speak anything but Latin. I listened to my right and to my left and did not know where to turn my ear. And when I discovered that they were talking to me I could have wished myself anywhere else than there and was ashamed that I did not know Latin. But when I look back on it today, I must smile and think to myself that to compose a Stabat Mater is, after all, better than to know Latin."

[3] Once again, George Bernard Shaw could make neither heads nor tails of Dvořák's music: "What I heard of [the "Dumka" Trio] . . . was mere rhapsody, with more or less pretense of sonata form about it, pretty enough, but not getting much higher than that."

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est in Wagner and Liszt was due in part to their own pronounced nationalistic tendencies. Explaining his change of stylistic course, he said:

> I consider opera the most suitable form for the [Czech] nation. This music is listened to by the broad masses, whereas when I compose a symphony I might have to wait years for it to be performed. . . . My main bias is toward dramatic creation.

But whatever his inclination of the moment may have been, Dvořák was always a *tuneful* composer, and for all the not-so-superficial differences between, say, the F Minor and "Dumka" Trios, or the *Symphonic Variations* and Eighth Symphony, it was his lifelong ability to compose wonderfully attractive melodies that bound together the varied aspects of his style and made them recognizably "Dvořákian." Rarely in the history of classical music has there been so thoroughly likable a composer—or one whose likability was not purchased at the cost of his seriousness.

ALL THESE aspects of Dvořák's style played a part in the most intriguing episode in his otherwise humdrum life, the lengthy sojourn in the United States that is the subject of *New Worlds of Dvořák*.

Why did so private a man—and one who suffered so acutely from so debilitating a condition as agoraphobia—choose to sail the Atlantic to take up a demanding post in a foreign land? According to Beckerman, Dvořák, like many other 19th-century Europeans, had been intrigued by the notion of a "new world" uncorrupted by modernity. Familiar for years with Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*, he had long wanted to compose a work inspired by that once-beloved tale of Indian life. In addition, he was offered a generous salary to run the National Conservatory ($15,000, the equivalent of $284,000 today), a significant consideration for a married man with six children. Beyond all this, though, Dvořák was powerfully engaged by the opportunity to shape America's as yet unformed musical culture, using the same techniques with which he had helped to create a "Czech" style of classical composition.

In 1892, there was no such thing as "American" classical music, only American-born composers like John Knowles Paine and Horatio Parker who had studied in Europe and wrote music slavishly derivative of their European models. Jeannette Thurber, president of the National Conservatory, longed for a more distinctively American style, and thought Dvořák might be the right man to show the way to it. The mission strongly appealed to the idealistic composer, who wrote to a friend upon his arrival in New York:

> The Americans expect great things of me. I am to show them the way into the Promised Land, the realm of a new, independent art, in short a national style of music! . . . This will certainly be a great and lofty task, and I hope that with God's help I shall succeed in it.

Dvořák promptly immersed himself in American folk idioms, including black spirituals and Indian music, and within a year of his arrival he produced the Ninth Symphony in E Minor, Op. 95, to which he affixed the title "From the New World." The first and most successful of a series of pieces composed in the U.S., the "New World," discussed in detail by Beckerman, incorporates a wealth of American material. The main theme of the first movement, for instance, is based on the spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," while the slow movement and scherzo are inspired by specific passages from *Song of Hiawatha*.

In addition, Dvořák spent the summer of 1893 visiting an immigrant community in Iowa, and his impressions of that trip also left their mark on the symphony:

> It is very strange here. Few people and a great deal of empty space. A farmer's neighbor is often four miles off. Especially in the prairies there are endless acres of field and meadow and that is all you see. . . . [I]t is very "wild" here, and sometimes very sad—sad to despair.

The "New World" and other similar works, most notably the F Major String Quartet ("American"), Op. 96 (1893), were successful with audiences and critics alike and have remained popular to this day, in America and elsewhere. Moreover, a generation of young American composers, among them Edward MacDowell and George Chadwick, were inspired by Dvořák's example to make use of folk material in their classical compositions, thus laying the groundwork for what would later evolve into the distinctively "American" idiom of Aaron Copland and his contemporaries of the 20's and 30's.

Dvořák, however, followed a different path after returning to Europe in 1895. First he completed the elegiac B Minor Cello Concerto, Op. 104, the greatest of his "abstract" compositions—though one which, in the manner of Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*, appears to embody a secret program that may be related in some way to the romantic feelings he felt for a woman not his wife. After that, he abandoned both abstract music and his "American" idiom, choosing instead to spend the rest of his life composing tone poems and operas on nationalist themes, a development that shocked many of his Austro-German admirers.[4] Though the specifically

[4] As Eduard Hanslick, the anti-Wagnerite Viennese critic who championed both Brahms and Dvořák, wrote on the occasion of the premiere of *The Water Goblin*, Op. 107 (1896), "I am afraid that with this detailed programmatic music Dvořák has stepped on a slippery slope. . . . Dvořák is a true musician who has proved a hundred times that he needs no program and no description to enchant us through the medium of pure, absolute music."

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Czech content of these works (and the fact that the operas are sung in Czech, a language notoriously resistant to accurate pronunciation by non-Czech singers) has kept them from finding a wide audience outside Central Europe, they are works of high quality and are gradually becoming better known.

One of the most interesting anecdotes in Beckerman's book is a conversation about Wagner reported by one of Dvořák's pupils:

> The Master began: "I always envied Wagner that he could write [prose]. Where would I be today if I could write! And I can't speak either.—But listen," and he raised his voice under the stress of some strong emotion, "if I could speak I should call our nation here and I should climb up that hill and from there I should tell them something, and tell it to them straight, but I can't speak."
>
> And then he relapsed once more into silence.

Beckerman not unreasonably interprets this remark as embodying Dvořák's wish to become not merely a "spokesman" for the Czech people but a Wagner-like bard who through the medium of opera (and the Lizstian tone poem) simultaneously expressed national yearnings and his own interior life. In this respect, he might well be compared with Tchaikovsky, another composer who, in Beckerman's phrase, sought "both to use and to transcend the merely national while remaining truthful to a personal idiom." This is indeed an apt summary of what Dvořák was trying to do throughout his career. It also helps explain why so many critics wrongly pigeonholed him as a gifted nationalist, undeniably talented but ultimately provincial in appeal.

What it does not explain is why this wrong-headed appraisal continues to cast a shadow over the music of so great a composer. For despite the fact that Antonín Dvořák fails to fit the profile of a Romantic genius, that is exactly what he was. To be specific, he was the equal of Tchaikovsky and Brahms, as well as a significant (if unacknowledged) influence on later composers like Copland, Bartók, and Vaughan Williams, who similarly incorporated national elements into their own styles.

But even if Dvořák had exerted no influence whatsoever, he would have the strongest possible claim on our attention solely on account of the quality of his compositions. Paradoxical as it may sound, he was a *modest* giant, and his modesty long obscured the richness and depth of his music. Today, he is underestimated only by those listeners who refuse to believe the evidence of their ears—or who prefer to let critics do their listening for them.

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Dvořák on CD: A Select Discography

ALL OF Dvořák's major works have been recorded, most of them many times, and though some of the best of these performances are currently out of print—including the Hollywood String Quartet's celebrated 1955 version of the "American" Quartet—there is still no shortage of first-rate Dvořák on CD. Here are ten noteworthy examples, ranging from the 78 era to the present:

1935: The dark, tangy sound of the Czech Philharmonic, among the greatest of Europe's "regional" orchestras, can be heard to exceptionally vivid effect in the 78-era performances of the *Slavonic Dances*, Opp. 46 and 72 (1878-87), and *Carnival* Overture, Op. 92 (1891), led by Václav Talich, a brilliant pupil of Arthur Nikisch who served for many years as the orchestra's chief conductor. Though comparatively little known outside his native land, Talich in his many recordings has left no doubt of his great gifts (Music & Arts CD-658).

1937: The Cello Concerto was played by every important cellist of the 20th century, but never more memorably than by Pablo Casals, whose noble interpretation is finely accompanied by George Szell and the Czech Philharmonic (Naxos Historical 8.110930).

1953: Arturo Toscanini's electrifyingly precise studio recording of the "New World" Symphony with the NBC Symphony is currently available as part of a two-CD set, coupled with symphonies by Mozart, Haydn, Cherubini, and Schumann (RCA Victor Red Seal 74321-59481-2, two CD's).

1961: At the very end of his life, Bruno Walter recorded the Eighth Symphony with a Hollywood studio orchestra, a warm, flexible interpretation that is rightly regarded as one of his finest (Sony Classical SMK 64484).

1969: All four of Dvořák's piano trios, including the sternly Brahmsian F Minor and ultranationalistic "Dumka," have been handsomely recorded by the Beaux Arts Trio (Philips 454 259-2, two CD's).

1971: In his old age, the pianist Arthur Rubinstein worked frequently with the then-new Guarneri Quartet, a collaboration that brought out the best in an artist who normally tended to sound cautious in the studio. One of their most successful performances, Dvořák's A Major Piano Quintet, has recently been coupled on CD with an equally striking version of the Brahms Piano Quintet (RCA Victor Red Seal 09026 63067-2).

1973-77: Rafael Kubelik, the first Czech conductor to have a significant international career, recorded most of Dvořák's orchestral works, and Deutsche Grammophon has reissued a budget-priced box set containing superbly idiomatic performances with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra of the five concert overtures, four of the late symphonic poems (including *The Water Goblin*), the *Symphonic Variations*, and the complete *Slavonic Dances*. This invaluable collection offers a rare perspective on Dvořák's three styles—nationalist, Brahmsian, and Wagnerian (DG 469 366-2, three CD's).

1995: The Israeli-American violinist Gil Shaham and his sister, the pianist Orli Shaham, have recorded a marvelously well-played collection of Dvořák's music for violin and piano called, appropriately enough, *Dvořák for Two* (DGG 449 820-2).

1998: Only one of Dvořák's operas, *Rusalka*, Op. 114 (1900), shows any signs of entering the international repertory, in part because it has been championed by the American soprano Renée Fleming, who has sung the title role at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and other prestigious venues. Together with the Canadian *Heldentenor* Ben Heppner and Sir Charles Mackerras, a British conductor who has devoted much of his career to performing Slavonic music, Fleming has recorded *Rusalka* with the Czech Philharmonic and a largely Czech supporting cast (London 460 568-2, three CD's).

2001: Few child prodigies who begin performing at extremely young ages prove capable of sustaining major careers in later life, but the violinist Sarah Chang appears to be beating the odds. Her latest CD, a lovely performance of the A Major String Sextet, Op. 48 (1878), with a quintet of players drawn from the Berlin Philharmonic, shows her to be a chamber musician of sensitivity and seriousness (EMI Classics 5 57243 2).

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Books in Review

A Matter of Temperament

The Right Man:
The Surprise Presidency
of George W. Bush
by David Frum

Random House. 303 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
James Q. Wilson

CHARACTER IS destiny, according to the aphorism made famous by George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss*; to judge from her own treatment of this claim, Eliot did not much approve of it. But the observation is hardly new. Heraclitus made it over two millennia earlier: "A man's character is his fate."

I have often thought about this sentiment while trying to sort out my own views on the American presidency. In 2000, a liberal friend of mine asked me in astonishment how I could support George W. Bush for the presidency. He was, she said, too dumb—and she probably also thought that he had gotten even dumber by living in Texas. Since my own family is from Texas, I sat down and wrote her a letter in which I said that from what I could tell, temperament was more important than intelligence in selecting the chief executive of everything from a business firm or a voluntary association to the federal government.

Of course, intelligence is important. A candidate must understand the issues, be able to connect facts and concepts, and express his understanding well to other people. But I suspected that what my friend meant by "intelligence" was something more akin to what we encounter in college: verbal facility, a lucid memory, and skill at quick give-and-take.

I have met many chief executive officers of private companies and have been struck by how much they vary in this sort of intelligence. I am not old enough to have known William Knudsen, the one-time head of General Motors, who, when asked by the government to evaluate some new program, thought about it and finally said, "It won't work." When asked what he meant, he repeated: "It won't work." He was right. I have also known some CEO's of high verbal facility who are excellent at quick give-and-take. What the two varieties of executives have had in common is not the same sort of intelligence but the same temperament.

That temperament was once described by the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott in these words: "Not an abstract idea, or a set of tricks, not even a ritual, but a concrete, coherent manner of living in all its intricateness." This view, impressed upon me by the late Edward C. Banfield, stuck with me as I taught in a business school for some dozen years. Even though I knew nothing worth teaching about business, it was a most enjoyable experience; the students were bright, hard-working, and pleasant to be around. But in the years since my retirement from the school I have been struck by how often the most successful entrepreneurs have turned out to be not the students who performed the best on my exams (exams that, I confess, measured rather little about business) but those who showed a grasp of the

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problems presented to them and had a good way of approaching those problems. All of my students were bright (in the college-defined sense), but the brightest were not usually the most successful.

This applies to Banfield himself. Though he was in possession of one of the finest intellects I have ever known, he could not have organized a two-car funeral. I once helped him pull down a tree, and his plan—to rope the tree to the bumper of his car—almost resulted in launching the car into the stratosphere.

It also applies to Presidents. I revere James Madison, the father of the Constitution. He had an extraordinary mind, and his contributions to *The Federalist* made him, along with Alexander Hamilton, the deepest student of our political regime. But I am not convinced he was a very good President. On his watch, the British burned down the White House.

Among the Presidents I greatly admire, I wrote to my friend, are Washington, Lincoln, Coolidge, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and Reagan. (By "admire" I do not mean that I have agreed with all of their policies but that in my opinion they handled the key features of their job masterfully.) Among those for whom I have much less admiration are Wilson, Hoover, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, and Clinton. With some exceptions, the "smartest" Presidents are on the second list.

Wilson had been a college president, Hoover a gifted engineer, and Nixon a brilliant student of foreign policy. But Wilson helped misalign postwar Europe and created a useless League of Nations, Hoover thought the answer to the Depression was to cut government spending, and Nixon had a fatal character flaw that led him to imagine enemies everywhere. Carter had thought carefully about foreign affairs and got almost all of it wrong, and Clinton was, well, Clinton—perhaps the most skilled political personality and best public debater of modern times but one who in eight years accomplished next to nothing.

MY FRIEND had no doubt heard all of the jokes that made the rounds on the television shows in 2000: that Bush and his running mate Dick Cheney were the Wizard of Oz ticket—"one needs a heart, the other a brain"—and that Bush cared only about "huntin' and executin'." The cracks were pretty silly, but they accurately reflected the media's storyline: Al Gore may have been a phony, Bush was a dope. (At least that is how the press portrayed the contest until the vote count in Florida changed the story to one of an allegedly "stolen election.") But, as I said to my friend, my reason for preferring George W. Bush was that, having met him twice for conversations, I thought he had the right temperament to be President.

Having now read David Frum's *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush*, I think this even more strongly. Usually I am reluctant to read books like Frum's. I recall an earlier volume by a Harvard-trained man who, after a year or so in Jimmy Carter's White House, set out to explain to the world why he was smarter than everyone else he had met there. And I remember a similar book, again by a Harvard-trained man, written after a brief tour with President Reagan. Maybe the problem is Harvard. In any case, Frum, a Yale graduate, has done better than those two, perhaps because he began by thinking he was smarter than others and ended up thinking he was not so smart after all.

Frum approached his first year as a junior speechwriter for George W. Bush with many of the same reservations held by my friend. Though she is a liberal and he a conservative, Frum was taken aback by the first words he heard in the Bush White House: "Missed you at Bible study." What disconcerted Frum, who is Jewish, was hearing an implicit summons to study the Christian Bible: not compulsory, but not entirely uncompulsory, either. He was also struck by the absence of certified intellectuals on the White House staff: no Rexford Tugwell, no Henry Kissinger, no Daniel P. Moynihan, no George P. Shultz. Of course, Karl Rove, a serious thinker as well as a skilled politician, was there, but who else?

Frum, a bright man who has written some good books and essays, seems to have been initially captured by the college definition of intelligence. But his views soon changed, and not because he discovered that Bush was well educated. It has been noted by others, after all, that the President graduated from Yale and earned an MBA at Harvard Business School, while Al Gore, though he graduated from Harvard, never finished either divinity school or law school. I do not attach much significance to these differences; they could have any number of politically irrelevant causes. Nor is this what swayed David Frum.

Instead, he focuses rightly on the actual decisions Bush made, for this is the essence of the matter. A good executive must know what is important, must make moral judgments about how to manage important matters, and must inspire subordinates and colleagues to act as he wishes them to act and to defend his core convictions against the relentless attacks they will surely suffer.

President Bush's central beliefs, according to Frum, come out of a very different source from President Reagan's. The latter was a profound conservative who mistrusted government, while the former is an evangelical Christian who does not distrust government. Now, many people think that is exactly what is wrong with Bush; he is, they say, censorious, prudish, and ostentatiously devout. But that is not the

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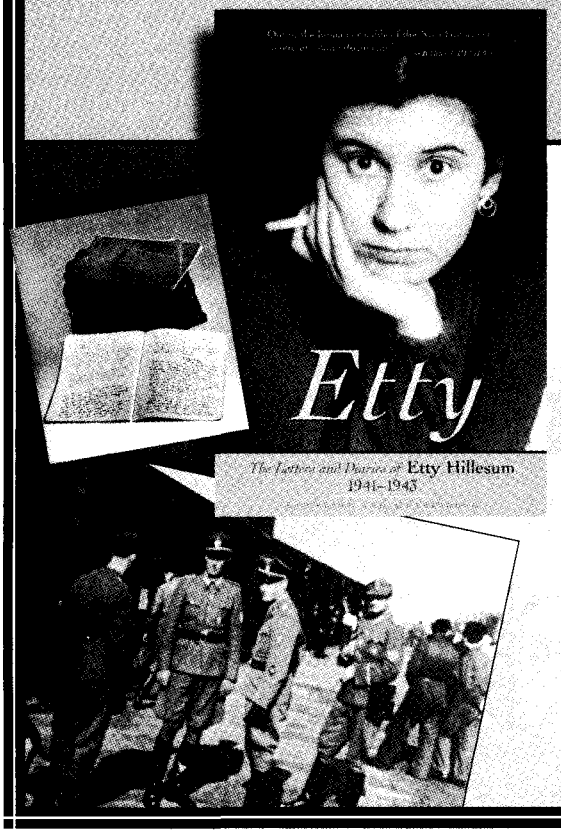

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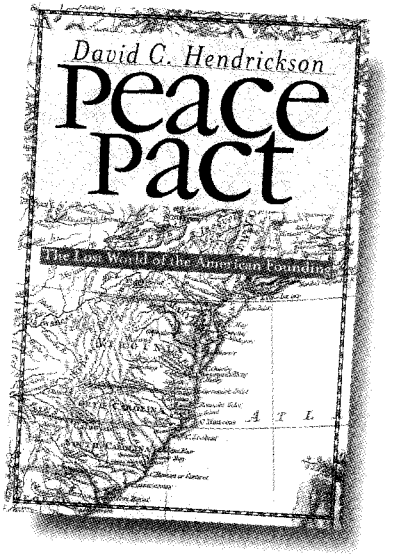

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case. Bush's brand of Christianity makes him rather calm, patient, and deliberative in the pursuit of what he believes is the right thing.

That right thing may embrace actions and attitudes that would, conventionally though inaccurately, be described as "liberal." (If the press ever reported it, you would know that Bush is an environmentalist who built in Crawford, Texas, a ranch house that is a model of recycled water, low energy costs, and drought-tolerant plants.) But his core convictions include giving back to taxpayers a big part of government surpluses, supporting education, encouraging churches and synagogues to do more to help those in need, and drawing a firm line against terrorism. These are *his* principles, not those of Andrew Card, Dick Cheney, or Karl Rove. The President, some may be surprised to learn but Frum amply demonstrates, runs the White House.

An example. When a Chinese fighter pilot rammed an American surveillance plane, forcing it to land on Hainan Island, there was the usual flurry of diplomatic moves that ended in our air crew being freed and compensation being paid to China. When it was over, a journalist asked the President whether, despite our longstanding "one China" policy, he thought we had an obligation to defend Taiwan if China attacked it. "Yes, we do," Bush replied. "With the full force of the American military?" the reporter pressed. "Whatever it took," the President replied. The doctrine of "strategic ambiguity" toward Taiwan, pioneered by Jimmy Carter and embraced by Republican as well as Democratic secretaries of state, had died.

Another example. When the President said he had looked Vladimir Putin in the eye and gotten "a sense of his soul," the world tittered. What Bush meant, it now appears, was that he and Putin had agreed on the threat posed by radical Islamic fundamentalism. Two months later, when the war against terrorism began, Putin measured up to Bush's judgment: he increased Russian oil production to calm world markets, kept his nuclear force on standby when the United States went on full alert, allowed U.S. forces to enter Uzbekistan, and offered only the mildest objections to our abandoning of the anti-ballistic missile treaty. Maybe it was Putin's soul on display, maybe it was just smart politics: either way, Bush had judged him accurately.

A third example would be Bush's response to 9/11, but everyone knows that story. A better and less well-known one concerns his attitude toward Israel. He had campaigned for the presidency without saying much about Israel, and apparently entered office eager to distance himself from the incessant efforts, culminating in the Clinton presidency, to solve the "problem" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Frum tartly observes, he was also regarded by many Jews as either a redneck Texan or an upper-class frat boy, in either case as someone who had little natural affinity with their concerns. Many serving American diplomats, in company with their predecessors, were maintaining that a "sound" American policy in the Middle East meant taking a frequent hammer to Israel for failing to advance "the peace process," and there seemed little reason to think that Bush felt otherwise.

But Bush had flown over the territory of Israel, observed its tiny size and porous borders, and talked with Ariel Sharon. According to Frum, when the freighter *Karine A.* was caught with many tons of Iranian arms bound for Yasir Arafat's forces in Gaza, Arafat made the mistake of personally reassuring Bush that the arms were not his. That did it. "Bush does not lie to you," Frum writes. "You had better not lie to him." Bush calmly responded that he recognized Israel's right to defend itself, and denounced Arafat for supporting terrorists. Arafat became one of the few important leaders with whom Bush would not talk. In a June 2002 speech, Bush supported the creation of a Palestinian state, but only if it were democratic, tolerant, liberal, and without Arafat.

In doing all this, Bush moved in step with, but also helped create, the mood of his own party. Public-opinion polls in recent years have showed Republicans much more supportive of Israel than Democrats, while the proportion of Democrats supporting the Palestinians has run nearly three times higher than Republicans. This is a remarkable fact, and one that has received much less attention than it deserves.

BUSH, FRUM concludes, is an unusual man. He has many human faults—he can be incurious, uninformed, impatient, devoid of the right words—but he is not a lightweight. Rather, Frum argues, he is an unfamiliar kind of heavyweight, a man with a strong vision and personal courage who is willing to take the high-risk option if that is what the security of the country requires. He is good without being weak, and a natural wartime leader.

Who would have thought it? No one who believes that the marks of a good leader, especially in wartime, are a talent for verbal sparring and the resource of a quick memory. But I suspect the American public has known it all along. During campaign seasons, they watch the presidential debates not to learn who among the candidates can most easily identify an obscure world leader or most accurately describe a piece of legislation but rather for an insight into character and temperament. David Frum confirms that they are right to do so.

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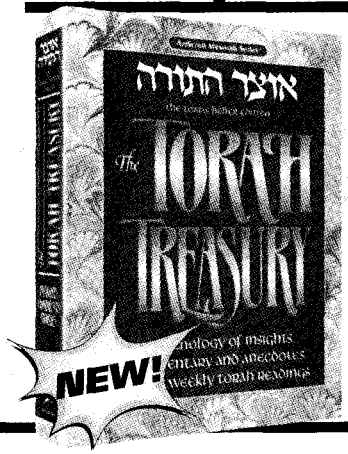

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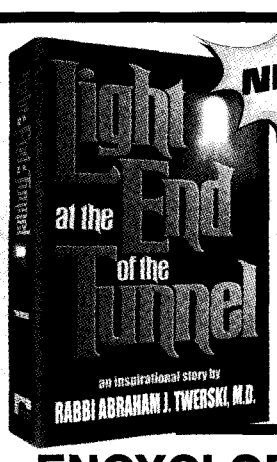

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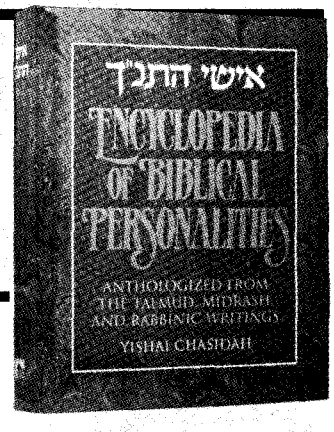
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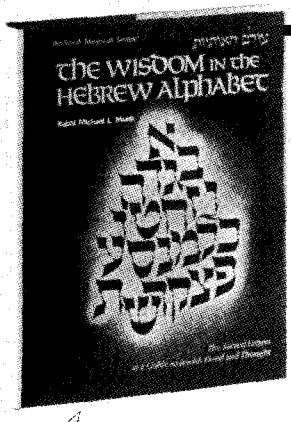

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The Pundit

Longitudes and Attitudes:
Exploring the World
After September 11
by Thomas L. Friedman
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 224 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Michael A. Ledeen

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN, who writes the prestigious foreign-affairs column for the *New York Times*, is a lucky man. He endures no editorial oversight, receives total support from his paper's publisher, and draws on a seemingly unlimited expense account that enables him to travel extensively.

Using his good fortune to good effect, Friedman has become enormously influential. He has earned the admiration of his peers, as demonstrated by his three Pulitzer prizes, and each of his books, including this one, has been a best-seller. Influence has, in turn, given him access to any leader or thinker he wants to talk to; in this collection of columns, which includes previously unpublished excerpts from a "diary," he recounts meetings with the king of Jordan, the acting monarch of Saudi Arabia, top American officials, various European policy experts, and the like. In short, Friedman's columns are more than just one man's view of the world; for better or worse, they present the thoughts of the major foreign-policy pundit of the age.

Longitudes and Attitudes is organized chronologically rather than by subject, but for the most part it deals with three interrelated subjects: September 11, 2001 and its specific aftermath, including the American campaign in Afghanistan; the war on terrorism considered more broadly; and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, which has been a steady object of Friedman's attention ever since his days as a peacenik student activist at Brandeis.

On each of these topics, Friedman has undeniably valuable things to say. On the "causes" of 9/11, for example, he insists—contrary to much conventional wisdom—that the terrorists did not act out of economic or moral "desperation," stressing in one column that most of them came from good families and had studied or worked for some time in Europe. He also argues convincingly that two decades of American appeasement of terrorist activity helped to encourage the attack on us:

> [Our] enemies took us less and less seriously and became more and more emboldened. . . . They thought they could always "outcrazy" us, and they were right. They thought we would always listen to the Europeans and opt for "constructive engagement" with rogues, not a fist in the face, and they were right.

When it comes to the larger war on terror, Friedman states that, although "there will be a season later for talking," now is the "season of hunting down people who want to destroy our country." In this connection, he also pens an appreciation of the role played by fear in the foreign relations of a great power:

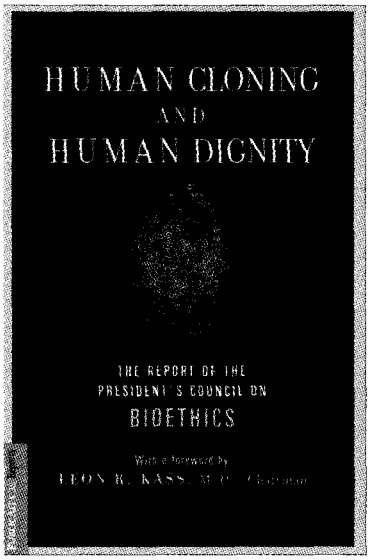
> From here forward, it's the bad guys who need to be afraid every waking moment. The more frightened our enemies are today, the fewer we will have to fight tomorrow.

Friedman has similarly sensible, if isolated, passages on Israel and the Palestinians. "If the Palestinians persuade the Israeli center that they are ready to live side by side in peace," he writes in one column, "they will get a state; if they don't, they won't. Everything else is just commentary." There are other such observations, equally lucid and equally terse.

IF THE whole book were of this quality, it would be easy enough to sec-

MICHAEL A. LEDEEN *is a contributing editor of* National Review Online *and the author of* The War Against the Terror Masters.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?



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ond the general acclaim for Friedman's wisdom. But, alas, for every flash of clarity one must suffer pages upon pages of confusion, contradiction, and utter conventionality. Yes, Friedman did proclaim right after September 11 that Arab-Israeli peace talks were out of season; but by early November, although the *intifada* was still very much in full swing, he was back to hectoring President Bush to send a high-level negotiator to revive the "peace process." Yes, he did notice that many terrorists are not driven by economic misery or existential despair, but in practically the next breath, and with the same breezy assurance, he could write that "The reason so many Muslims are angry is because *most of them* live under antidemocratic regimes backed by America, with lagging economies and shrinking opportunities for young people" (emphasis added).

Friedman's second thoughts on Muslim "anger" were as false as his first thought was true. Among the biggest Muslim populations are those in Iran, India, and Indonesia, and the people of these countries—two of which have democratically elected governments—are in fact not notably angry with us. The one antidemocratic regime—Iran—is violently anti-American, but, contrary to Friedman's model, the Iranian *people* are trying to get rid of their angry Muslim leaders so that they can have a secular democratic government.

This point is worth lingering on for a moment. As Bernard Lewis has observed, there are three kinds of states in the Middle East: purportedly friendly but corrupt and oppressive regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, whose unhappy people blame America for their misery; other dictatorial regimes like Iran, Iraq, and Syria, whose tyrants hate America and whose people reflexively look to us for salvation; and democratic countries like Israel and, to a lesser extent, Turkey, whose governments and people both generally like America. Reality, in short,

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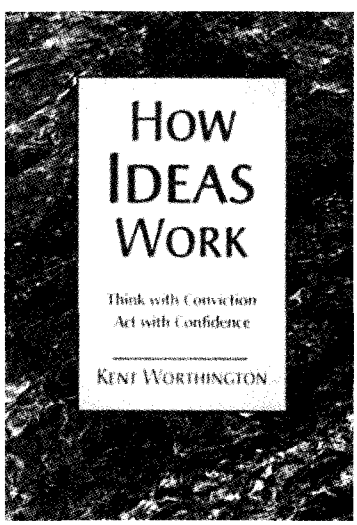

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is wholly at odds with Friedman's pop sociology.

That sociology itself, however, is wholly in line with his politics, and when his observations of reality clash with his politics, the latter will, sooner or later, prevail. Friedman is an outspoken liberal Democrat—the very first column in this book savagely attacks the Supreme Court's decision in *Bush* v. *Gore*, and Friedman later loudly regrets that Gore was not President after 9/11. Occasional lapses aside, moreover, it is the liberal prescription for American behavior that is most reliably on offer in his columns: adopt the Kyoto Protocol, reduce consumption of petroleum products, bail out failed countries like Mexico and Thailand, keep taxes high, lean on Israel.

The reason we must do these things, Friedman argues, is that they alone will give us the moral standing with which to ask the rest of the world to live up to *its* moral duty. This is dubious on its face, even if he had not already explained in the case of Muslims that the resentment directed at us is not a function of our actions. As a guide to the present crisis, it is useless.

Friedman recognizes that things will not fundamentally improve in the Islamic world until there is real change within: the jihadists must be rejected by the moderates, extremist passions must be tamed. But, at least in this book, he also sees no real role for the United States to play in the process, aside from the general need to burnish our moral image along the lines set out above (and, presumably, to kill actual terrorists). Here is his analogy:

> It was modern Germany that executed Nazism, by writing one of the world's most democratic constitutions and living up to it. In so doing, Germans transformed Germany from a destructive to a constructive force for themselves, Europe, and the world.

Once more, the facts are tellingly different. It was the American-led Allies who destroyed Nazism from the outside, then conducted a de-Nazification campaign within. West Germany (not "Germany") became a constructive force under Allied occupation, and the constitution adopted by West Germans was imposed by our military power. The same was done in Japan, and a similar process took place in Italy.

Why should jihadist Islam not be susceptible of the same sort of transformation? There are many Muslims—Friedman occasionally alludes to them—who want to be free and democratic. They have been praying for America to bring down the evil regimes that support terror and oppress their people, so that the Islamic world might undergo something akin to a Reformation. And yet, just as in the war between Israel and the Palestinians—for which his favored solution is that Israel limit its military response, withdraw from "occupied" territory, shut down its settlements, and negotiate, negotiate, negotiate—Friedman never seriously seems to entertain the possibility that a thorough, humiliating defeat of the terror masters might contribute to the hoped-for result.

It is true that, in the months since this book was prepared for publication, Friedman has tacked somewhat, coming reluctantly and qualifiedly to the conclusion that an American invasion of Iraq might well have beneficial effects on the entire region. But this just underscores the degree to which his thinking never strays far from the daily dish of the media elite in both America and Europe, at least some of whose members have likewise begun to accommodate themselves to the same idea. The only real surprise in Friedman's writing is to find the predominating platitudes leavened here and there with reports of observed reality that blatantly contradict them. Would it be too much to ask of the major pundit of the age that the contradictions be noticed, if not actually resolved?

The First Convert

The Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism
by David Klinghoffer
Doubleday. 304 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Noah Millman

DAVID KLINGHOFFER may hold the world's record for conversions to Judaism. As he recounted in his first book, the autobiographical *The Lord Will Gather Me In* (1998), his journey to traditional Jewish practice involved no fewer than four conversions—and four circumcisions, one self-administered. So it makes sense that his second book, *The Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism*, should focus on a man whose journey toward an understanding of God was similarly strenuous, extending even to a circumcision at the age of ninety-nine.

The book, an effort to expound the Orthodox religious perspective on Abraham to a wide audience, is structured as a biography. To write a biography of so famous an individual—and one whose historicity is so widely doubted—is itself a daunting task. Klinghoffer makes clear that he has not set out to present a fictionalized account in the manner of Anita Diamant's "biblical" novel, *The Red Tent*. Nor is his objective to provide a reconstruction of the undisputed facts of the patriarch's life; as he admits, such facts cannot be definitively ascertained. Rather, he has tried something different: he means to give us a life narrative based largely on midrash and aggadah—the corpus of ancient rabbinic interpretations of and tales about the biblical text that is an important part of the Oral Law.

The result can be exhilarating by

NOAH MILLMAN, *a new contributor, writes* Gideon's Blog (*www.gideonsblog.blogspot.com*).

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very reason of its unfamiliarity. Where the biblical text is thin, commentary expands to fill the empty space. For example, the Bible needs all of six verses to bring us from Abraham's birth in Ur of the Chaldees to God's command to him to leave Mesopotamia for "the land that I will show thee." But recounting the midrashic "take" on this period in Abraham's life covers much of the first 50 pages of Klinghoffer's book. From the very first page, we meet with astrological portents heralding the patriarch's birth, and we are introduced to his nemesis, Nimrod—a man mentioned in only two verses in Genesis but in midrash enlarged into a mythic figure of opposition to the divine, and to Abraham.

Of course, we also learn the familiar highlights of the story as narrated in Genesis. Abraham's marriage to his barren half-sister Sarah; his journey down to Egypt, where he attempts to hide their marriage and pass her off as his sister; his relationship with his nephew, Lot; the fateful decision to take Hagar as a concubine; the annunciation of Isaac's birth, and the banishment of Ishmael and Hagar; and the *akedah*, the binding of Isaac—all are treated extensively, and all are enriched by being presented through a midrashic lens.

Sometimes, the commentary is of an ethical or psychological character. Klinghoffer dwells, for example, on the rabbinic idea that Abraham and Sarah complemented each other temperamentally and spiritually. According to one account, Abraham is the paragon of *hesed*, loving-kindness, whereas Sarah is the paragon of *mishpat*, justice. Abraham finds it hard to say no even when necessary; it falls to Sarah, therefore, to demand that he expel Hagar and Ishmael, who are distracting him from his God-ordained mission. But Sarah's strict mind also has severe limitations in confronting paradox or complexity; if a thing cannot be reduced to a simple yes or no, she is overwhelmed. Alongside this char-

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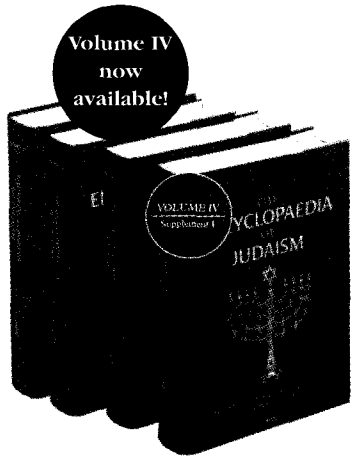

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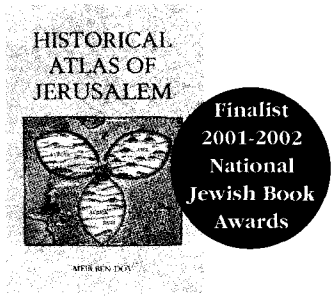

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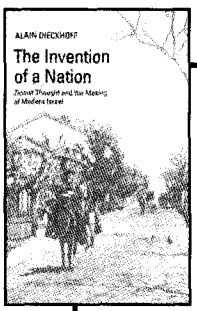
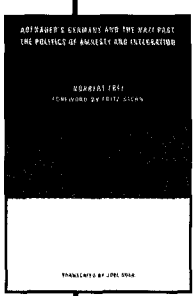
acterology, we also learn that both Abraham and Sarah were born hermaphrodites, and married each other in part because they were unsuited to anyone else; also, that Sarah was not merely barren but lacked a womb entirely, a fact that makes her eventual pregnancy all the more miraculous.

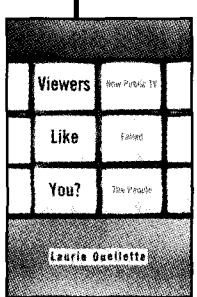
THE MIRACULOUS, indeed, was a regular feature of Abraham's life as Klinghoffer tells it, and (following the rabbis) he relates these miracles straightforwardly, as part of the evidence of God's manifest presence in the world. Thus, after Abraham destroys Nimrod's army by conjuring warlike angels out of dust, Klinghoffer asks: "Is this history? Or myth? It's both. It is a *siman* [sign], which is history in the form of myth, a sign to future generations." If this suggests that Klinghoffer is not primarily concerned with the "literal" truth of his narrative, he is at pains to emphasize that the rabbis were not "primitives who cannot understand what fact is." Rather, it is Klinghoffer's contention that the most reasonable stance to take with respect to the midrashic material is to accept it as true, however fanciful it may seem, because this account of the life of Abraham is more plausible than any alternative.

To make this case, Klinghoffer turns to various sources outside the text. He refers periodically both to archaeology and to modern textual criticism, sometimes to point out the contradictions in theories that dispute the historicity of the Bible, sometimes to illustrate how the archaeological record, although it may not always confirm the text, has arguably never convincingly conflicted with it. He makes use of modern understandings of ancient Near Eastern culture to explicate obscure points, placing these explanations alongside midrashic and other traditional interpretations. He even refers frequently to Islamic traditions that parallel (or are derived from) traditions in the Bible and other Jewish sources.

And he cites speculative scientific theories as well. In discussing Abraham's radical break from his father's idolatry, for example, Klinghoffer turns to the theory of human mental evolution proposed by the psychologist Julian Jaynes, according to which humans of Abraham's era were not really conscious, but communicated their decisions to themselves by means of hallucinations, which they thought were the voices of gods. Abraham was, presumably, the first man to evolve (with God's help) the unicameral mind we all now share. In discussing the *akedah*, Klinghoffer is puzzled by the fact that there are midrashim indicating that Isaac was actually killed on the altar, while others reject that view. He resolves the tension by reference to quantum mechanics: the interpretations correspond to two al-







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ternate "universes," one in which Isaac survives, another in which he is killed.

What kind of Abraham emerges from Klinghoffer's narrative? While individual episodes may highlight particular virtues—most notably, hospitality to strangers—two aspects of personality stand out. Abraham was a convert, the first in human history, and Klinghoffer endows him with a convert's zeal. Abraham is constantly occupied in spreading the gospel of the one God, collecting students and disciples first in Mesopotamia and later in Canaan. Where the biblical text appears to depict Abraham's revelation as a largely private covenant between him and God, the midrash, as filtered through Klinghoffer, gives us an Abraham who is out to convert the world.

His Abraham is no less a man possessed of a convert's iron conviction. An essential element of the popular image of Abraham is as the man who argued with God over the fate of the wicked people of Sodom. Klinghoffer's Abraham is not so inclined. Indeed, Klinghoffer himself declines to interpret that famous episode at all. "To regain some of its freshness and vigor," he says, "this biblical scene may need to be left alone for a generation or two." His only comment is that the answer to Abraham's famous question—does God punish the righteous along with the wicked?—is yes.

The book that results has its undeniable virtues. It is a readable introduction to the wealth of lore and insight to be found in midrash. And that material includes stories that are not only beautiful but edifying, qualities that Klinghoffer draws out powerfully and with affection. But his is, to say the least, a puzzling approach. The midrashic accounts, while clearly an honest attempt to make sense of the text, are far more supernatural, and far more obviously homiletical in intent, than the biblical text itself. To mine them for genuine historical information might be interesting. To treat them as literal history seems false to their very nature. And to defend their historicity by means of highly selective references to science and archaeology is just plain questionable. One wonders why a man of strong faith would *need* to resort to such spurious "proofs."

More troubling still is Klinghoffer's determination to make the oral tradition speak with a unitary voice. He points out, correctly enough, that "where the classical rabbinic or talmudic authorities appear to diverge, it is not exactly a disagreement but rather a *mahloket*, a very special kind of disagreement in which each view reflects a portion of the truth." But what Klinghoffer means by this is not that each inter-

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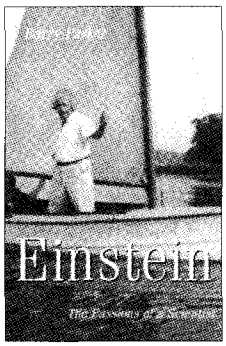

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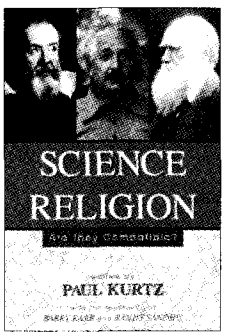

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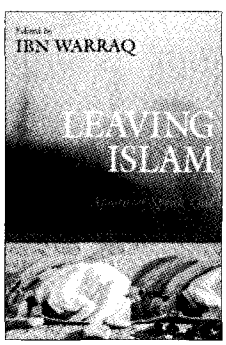

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pretation teaches us a complementary spiritual truth but that his (Klinghoffer's) job is to reconcile apparently divergent opinions in a literal-minded fashion. To go by his choices—which midrashim to highlight, which to downplay or omit—one might say that his own reading of the text is overburdened by *mishpat* and lacking in *hesed*.

Take the disputation over the fate of the people of Sodom, in which Abraham (invoking the principle of justice, appropriately enough) argues for sparing the whole city on account of the righteous within it. Klinghoffer's discomfort with the story is obvious, and obviously inadequate; but his comfort with the idea of collective punishment is chilling. Not that his view is illegitimate; it is a—though certainly not *the*—traditional explanation for the suffering of righteous people. But his eagerness to embrace it reveals much about the God that he has discovered.

Similarly, in discussing the *akedah*, Klinghoffer spends a great deal of time puzzling over whether Isaac was actually killed on the mountain, but no time puzzling over the terrible nature of God's command to Abraham to offer up his only son. As it happens, however, the midrash that forms the chief basis of Klinghoffer's narrative of the *akedah* has Abraham arguing with God after the sacrifice is averted:

> When you commanded me to sacrifice Isaac, I should have replied: Yesterday You told me, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called"; now You say to me, "Offer him there for a burnt offering." Nevertheless, I restrained my impulse and did not reply as I should have done.

Klinghoffer does not mention this discussion in his narrative.

In the Bible according to Klinghoffer, animal sacrifice is "a proxy for self-sacrifice": the person offering a sacrifice is to imagine sacrificing *himself* on an altar, and to be willing to do so if God wishes it. It is easy to see how someone in love with this notion would find the *akedah* to be largely free of troublesome elements. It is harder to see why a reader, glancing at newspaper headlines and seeing another self-professedly Abrahamic faith happily embracing violent self-sacrifice—and child-sacrifice—in the name of God, would not be troubled by Klinghoffer's blitheness.

The God whom Klinghoffer's Abraham has purportedly discovered is rather far from the God of the rabbis. In fact, had Abraham worshipped that God, one somehow doubts he would have had the success he did in converting so much of the world to the sublime truth of monotheism.

Neither East nor West?

Natasha's Dance:
A Cultural History of Russia
by Orlando Figes
Metropolitan Books. 729 pp. $35.00

How Russia Shaped the Modern World:
From Art to Anti-Semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism
by Steven G. Marks
Princeton. 393 pp. $29.95

Reviewed by
Steven Merritt Miner

In 1839, the Russian thinker Peter Chaadaev noted that, alone among nations, his had given "nothing to the world, bestowed not even a single idea upon the fund of human ideas, contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit." Chaadaev believed that Russia was doomed to remain a cultural backwater, lost between the great civilizations of the Orient and the West and destined only to pick up table scraps from the European banquet.

Chaadaev's lament is of more than historical interest. The Russian revolutions of the 20th century—first in 1917 and again in 1991—have left the country adrift, tilting precariously between the norms of democratic Europe and the norms of the autocratic East. Though Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, seems to have placed his bet on integration with the West, he nonetheless refers regularly to Russia's special mission and has stated that "Anglo-American liberalism" may be incompatible with the conditions of Russian life. Once again, as so often in the past, the question "whither Russia?" is very much alive.

In approaching this question, it is worth noting an irony. Even as Chaadaev in 1839 was despairing of Russia's capacity to contribute to civilization, his country was poised to produce a cultural explosion unlike any other in history. By the close of the 19th century—in the span of a single human lifetime—Russian painters, musicians, choreographers, and, above all, writers had seized an undisputed place in the world's artistic pantheon. Two new books explore this phenomenon, tracing the extraordinarily sharp arc of Russian cultural production.

In *Natasha's Dance*, the historian Orlando Figes offers a colorful and eclectic tour of Russia's efflorescence over two centuries. Figes begins his excursion with Russia's triumph over Napoleon in 1812, which he regards as the key turning point in modern Russian cultural history. Before then, the Russians had adhered almost slavishly to French fashions in art, literature, and even dress. Victory over the Grande Armée allowed the elite to break the shackles of its Francophilia and unearth and refresh its own homegrown traditions.

STEVEN MERRITT MINER, *a new contributor, is a professor of Russian history at Ohio University.*

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In support of this proposition, Figes devotes a great deal of space to the fate of the Decembrists, a group of army officers who rose against Czar Nicholas I in 1825 and were either exiled to Siberia or executed. This stress on a political element in what is a cultural history might seem odd, but there is a logic to it. The Decembrists were of the aristocratic elite, but, as Figes tells it, they had come to know the *narod*, the people, during the war with France, sharing the perils of the battlefield and the pleasures of its campfires with the conscripted peasants under their command. This contact opened a window through which the Russian intelligentsia began to explore their country's peculiar and often exotic essence.

The peasant question thus became a central theme of the amazing artistic flowering that continued until the icebox of Bolshevik terror froze the Russian landscape, driving its best minds into foreign exile or murdering them outright. And Figes does a fine job of documenting its cultural expression, with painters (like Ilya Repin) and composers (like Modest Mussorgsky and Alexander Borodin) struggling to find a way to render the peasant world and a dazzling cohort of writers searching in rural backwaters for the "Russian soul."

Throughout, as Figes emphasizes, the intelligentsia tended to idealize the peasantry, seeing it as somehow in possession of an uncorrupted essence, unspoiled by European cosmopolitanism. On the political Right, the so-called Slavophiles were the starkest adherents of this view, with writers like Aleksei Khomiakov and the brothers Aksakov contending that Russia could find salvation only by turning inward. But the Left also idealized the peasantry, if for very different reasons. Radical thinkers like Aleksandr Herzen and Nicholas Chernyshevsky saw in the *mir*, the peasant communes that dotted the steppes, the embryo of a future agrarian socialism.

Like all attempts to idealize an abstract essence, however, glorification of the peasantry was ultimately based on ignorance and proved bankrupt. Far from being a rural idyll, the peasant communes were generally squalid, violent, and resistant even to the simplest schemes for improvement. But this, too, has relevance today. Although, in the wake of the Communist catastrophe, the Left has long since abandoned any idealization of the lower social classes, the same failed line of thought continues to beguile some on the Russian Right who still worship at the altar of rural authenticity. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is a prominent and complicated example.

Figes does admirably well in tracing this and other themes in the course of his book. As he demonstrated in *A People's Tragedy* (1997), an account of the 1917 revolution, he has an eye for the engaging personal tale and is an adept storyteller. But he sometimes makes mistakes arising from a shallow understanding of certain aspects of Russian history, and those mistakes have consequences.

An example is his contention that the great cultural turn in 1812 came about through contacts between aristocratic officers and humble recruits. In fact, the Decembrists' fascination with the life of the peasantry was largely theoretical and owed more to their contacts with aristocratic German officers in the Napoleonic wars than to any actual connection with grimy and illiterate peasants.

The larger point here is that Russians were hardly alone in their quest to discover a national soul. The Romantic movement, born as a reaction against Enlightenment universalism and French cultural dominance, started in Germany and traveled to Russia by elite osmosis. To overstate Russian uniqueness is to understate

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the influence of the West, and eventually to miss all the important ways in which Russian culture is part and parcel of the achievement of European civilization.

IF FIGES scants the influence of the West on Russia, Steven G. Marks, a historian at Clemson University, goes off in a wholly different direction. He seeks to offer not a comprehensive history of Russian culture but to demonstrate, as his title has it, that "Russia Shaped the Modern World." Paradoxically, the primary means by which this occurred, in Marks's view, was through Russia's opposition to modernity itself.

If one defines modernity as the triumph of individualism, urban life, popular sovereignty, and free markets, then Russia, as Marks contends, definitely did produce countervailing cultural and political movements. Indeed, it became a beacon for critics and enemies of the West across two centuries.

Dostoevsky is one pivotal figure singled out by Marks. In particular, he notes the novelist's trenchant assault on the idea that rational, secular individuals could successfully fashion their own moral universe. Reason and individualism without God, Dostoevsky famously pronounced in *The Brothers Karamazov*, would lead only to perdition. In a world without an ultimate arbiter of good and evil, "all things are permissible," an ominous prediction that was in effect realized by the Bolshevik experiment.

But Bolshevism, too, fits neatly into Marks's framework. Lenin and his fellow revolutionaries sought to force modern industrial society into a new stage, beyond the uncertainties and harsh competition of capitalism. They saw themselves as the vanguard of an entirely new civilization built on plenitude and social harmony. As the world economy was entering an era of market dominance, the Bolsheviks embraced central planning. As realism in art was giving way to more abstract forms, the USSR's commissars enforced "socialist realism." Most significantly, as liberty was beginning its dramatic spread across the globe, the Bolsheviks stood for collectivism against the rule of individual conscience. In every realm, the results were disastrous.

MARKS WRITES provocatively and reflects deeply on the extraordinary intellectual interplay between Russia and the West, for good and, especially, for ill. But at certain junctures he too, like Figes, tends to exaggerate Russian uniqueness.

It is certainly true, for example, as Marks contends, that Russia contributed mightily to the genesis of modern anarchism. But is it really persuasive to argue that the largely forgotten anarchist Peter Kropotkin is the father of the modern Greens? Is there any evidence that anyone in today's environmentalist movement actually reads him?

Similarly with respect to Russian anti-Semitism. This was indisputably a virulent creed at the end of the 19th century, but it is hard to credit Marks's claim that the Black Hundreds, who engaged in agitation against Jews and carried out actual pogroms, were the foremost pioneers of modern, fascist-style anti-Semitism. For one thing, other countries—notably France and Germany—were far in advance of Russia in nurturing such destructive forces. For another, in elections to the Duma following the abortive 1905 revolution, the Black Hundreds and their supporters received only minimal support. By 1917, in the vicious struggle for power following the downfall of the czarist regime, they were not even a minimal factor.

As Russia seeks a new identity after Communism's collapse, it can be pernicious to overstate its historical separation from the main currents of Western culture. Though the two have unquestionably been on divergent historical trajectories, there have also been large areas of convergence, particularly in the realm of culture; in the main, Chaadaev was wrong. Despite the gloom that pervades some intellectual circles in Russia, and the temptation to look only inward for salvation, there are strong grounds for thinking that the country's fate is to be drawn closer to the Western orbit. Russia's reintegration into Europe will be easier when historians admit that this is not a new destination but, in important respects, a return.

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Subspecialty Health Care in the United States: More Is Better!

Scott W. Atlas, M.D., is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor of radiology and chief of neuroradiology at the Stanford University Medical Center.

The past decade has seen dramatic changes in the U.S. health care marketplace. More than two-thirds of patients in the United States are now enrolled in managed-care networks administered by conglomerate, cost-concerned managed-care bureaucracies. Despite managed care, however, health care costs have continued to rise—placing expensive new medical technologies at risk in discussions of containing health care costs.

Although the United States is leading the world into a new era in medicine with the convergence of advances in molecular biology, medical imaging, and minimally invasive diagnosis and therapy, a trend toward non-state-of-the-art technologies is directly correlated with the degree of managed-care penetration. We must realize that **reducing the availability of advanced medical technology will drastically affect our high standard of health care.**

A recent study by researchers at Dartmouth claims that the more subspecialties in health care, the more expensive the care, without significant benefits to the patient. These flawed conclusions received widespread news coverage and conveyed the dangerous implication that the linchpins of the United States health care system—subspecialty care and its associated advanced technology—are simply wastes of money.

Why are such studies misleading? Because the patient outcome measured is patient mortality, which is easily quantified by researchers despite its gross oversimplification of the end point. Most medical researchers agree that more subtle and complex parameters, such as quality of life, more relevantly assess the effects of sophisticated medical care. Indeed, **when experienced subspecialists perform complex medical procedures, numerous studies show improved outcomes.** Similarly, advanced medical imaging technologies may or may not influence mortality statistics, yet more rapid diagnosis using noninvasive, pain-free, and cost-effective methods is an important advantage.

Oversimplifying a complex issue can be dangerous. The widespread publicity generated by the Dartmouth study indicates the highly charged issue of expensive health care in the United States. The rising costs of health care, most of which are a result of technological advances, cannot continue to be tolerated by the current system. Yet technological innovation defined American medicine in the twentieth century. Leading-edge technology, and, more important, access to it, is often cited as the key difference between U.S. and other health care systems. Moreover, it is naïve to think that the uses of specialized medical technologies are best determined by generalists (a point well understood by the medical community).

The United States has the most sophisticated health care in the world. Advances in medical technology, which are essential to improving medical diagnoses and developing new therapies, are expensive and demand highly developed knowledge at the subspecialist level. Because we lead and teach the world the newest advances in medicine, we must sustain the commitment to new medical technologies and subspecialty care. Any proposals to contain health care costs need to ensure the continued development of medical technology.

— Scott W. Atlas, M.D.

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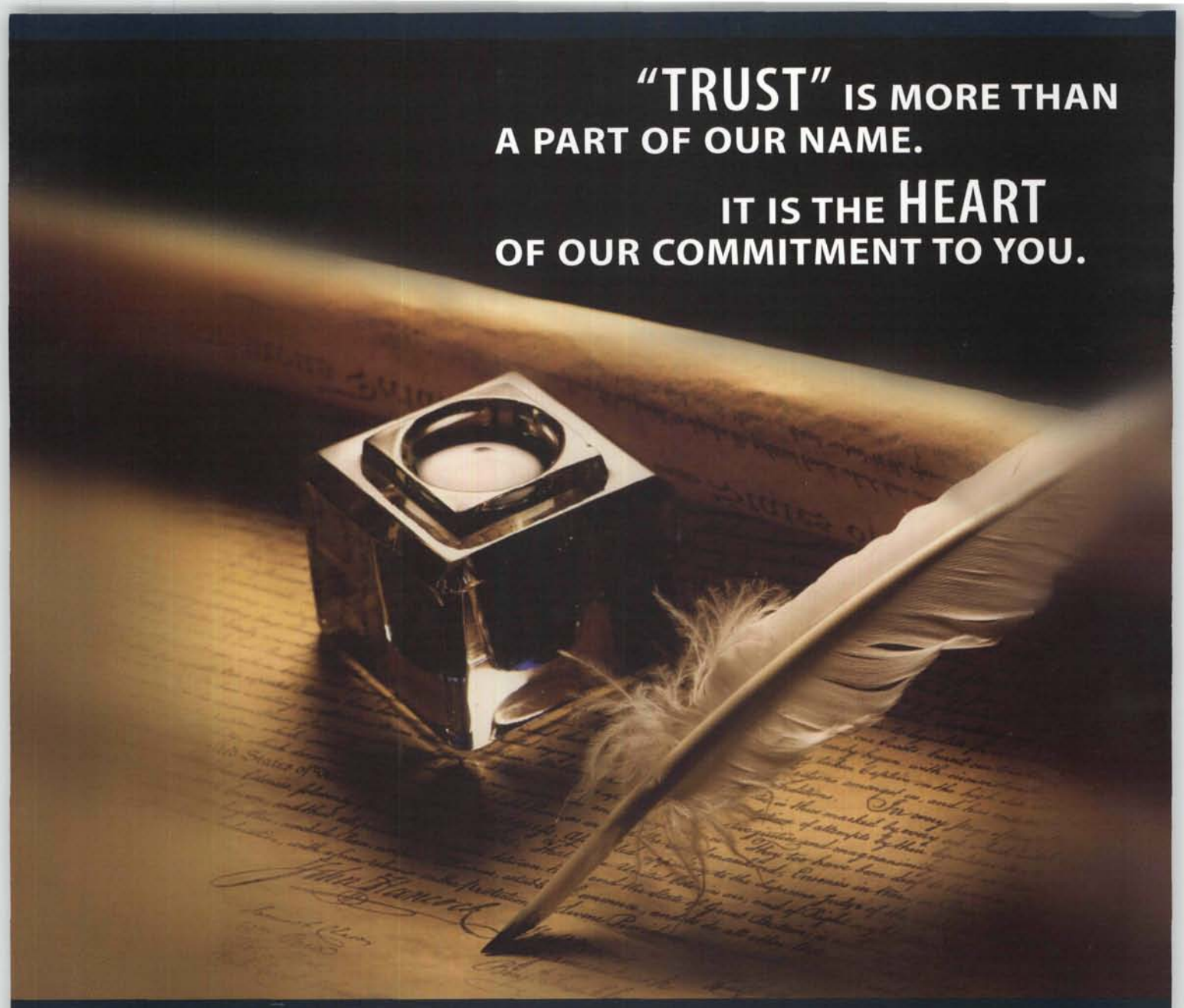

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